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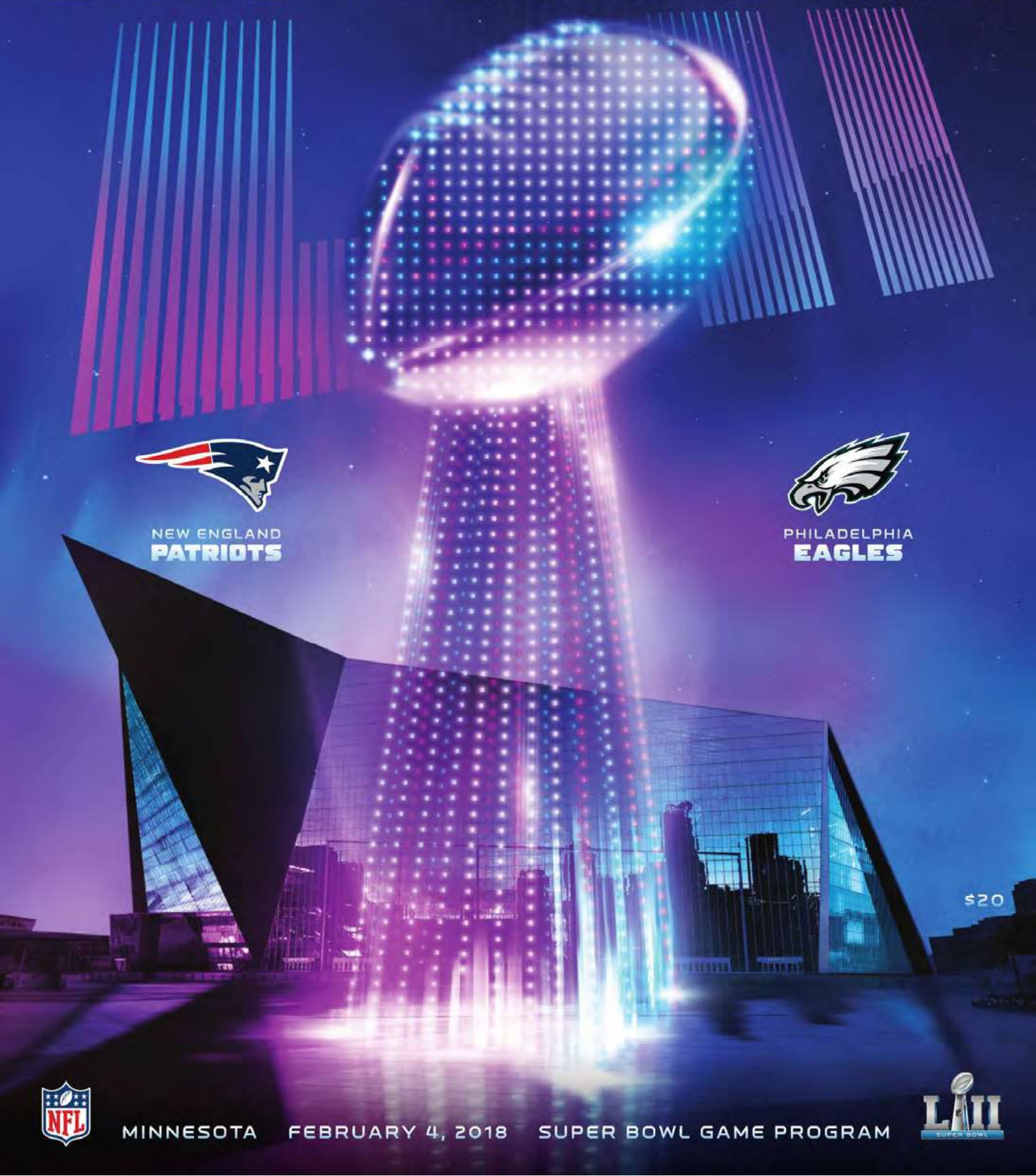

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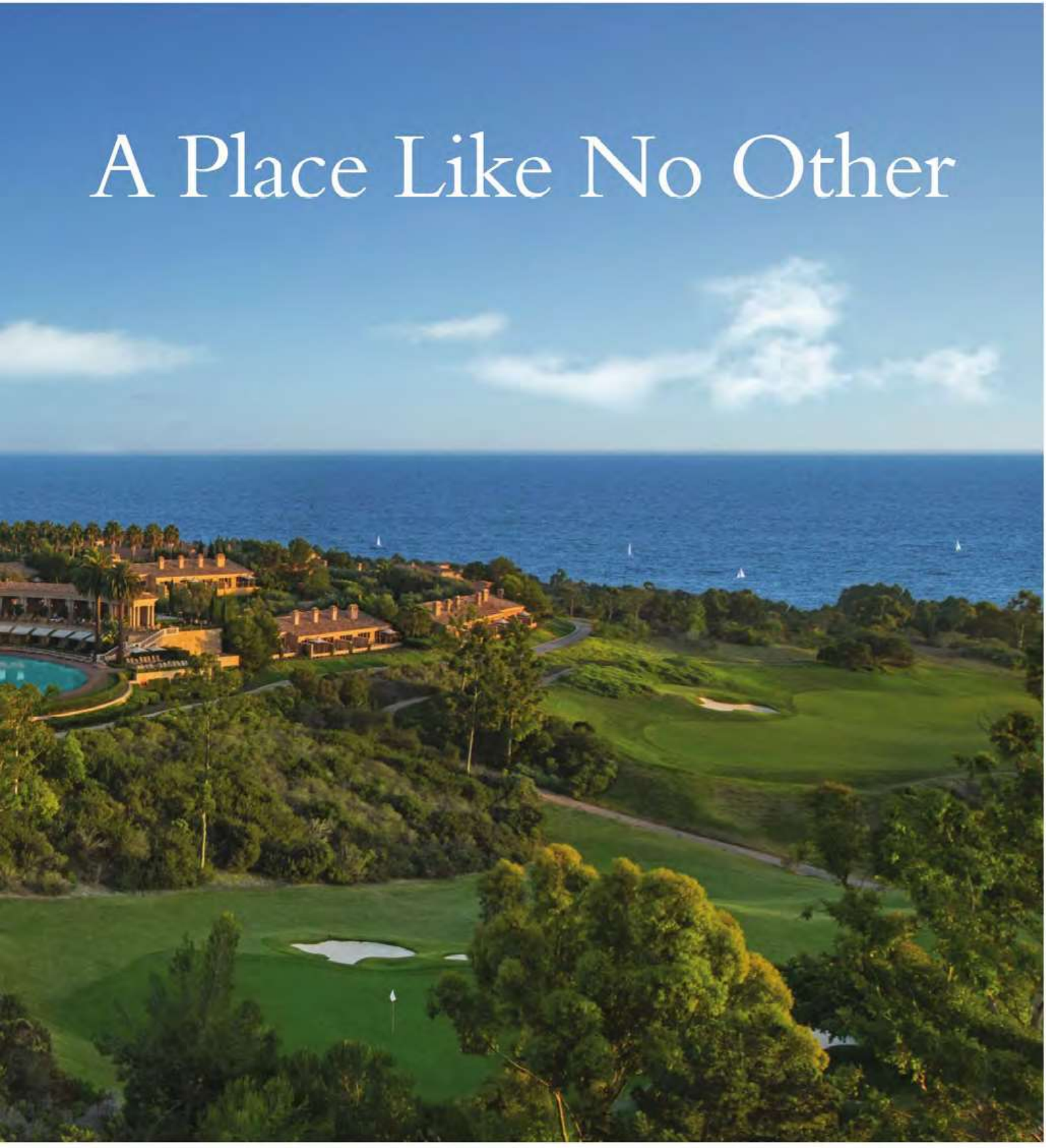

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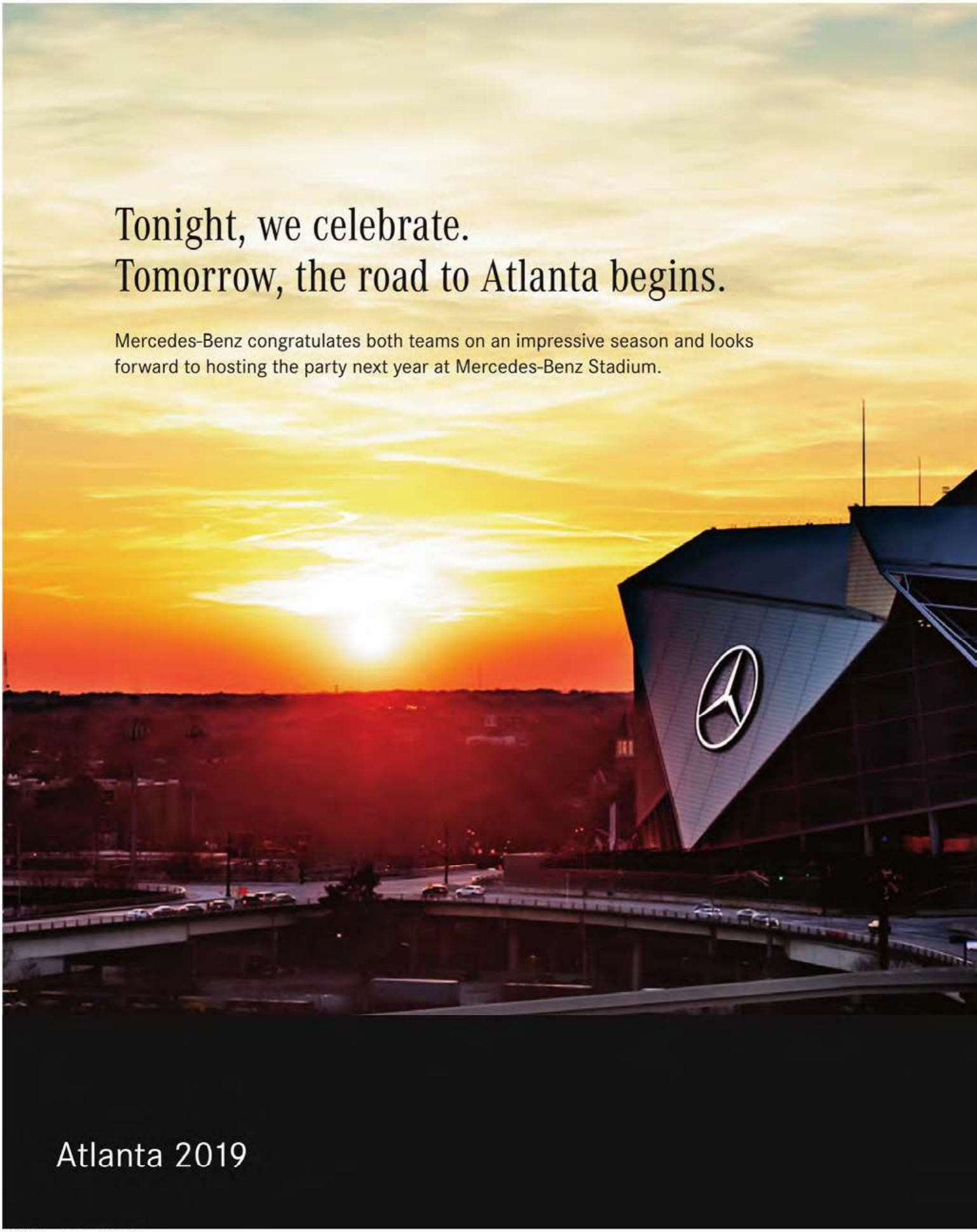
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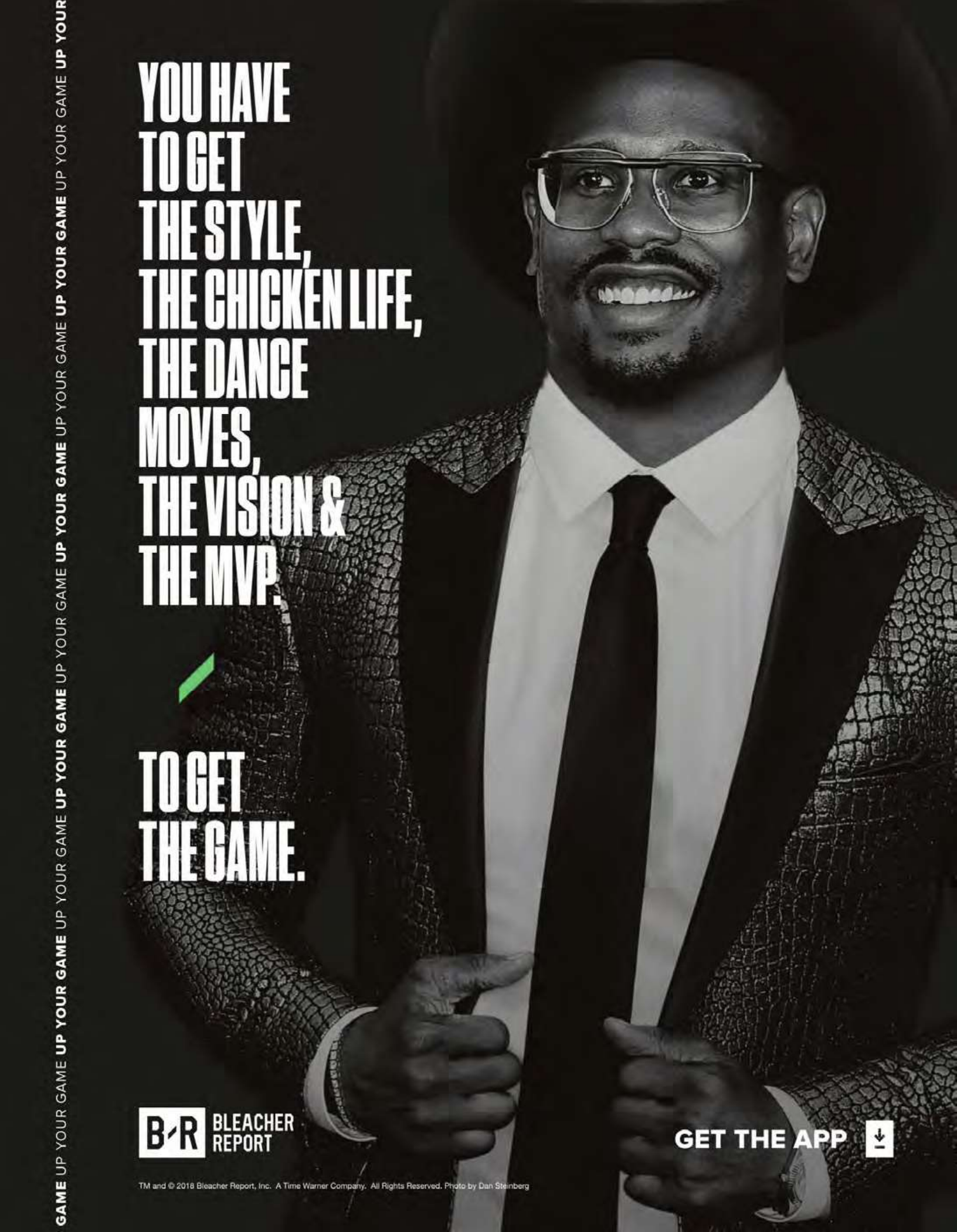
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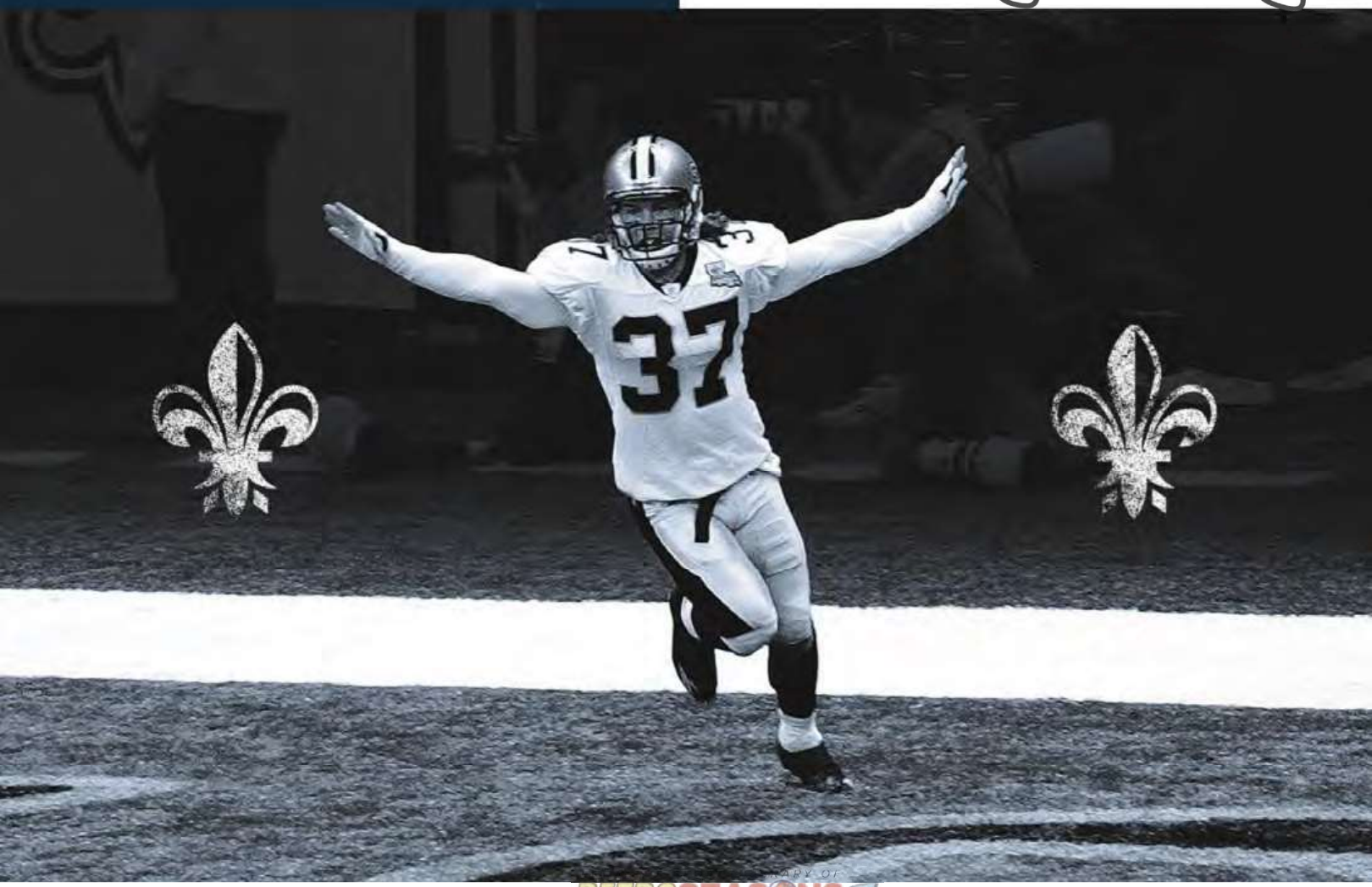

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THE PATRIOTS AND THE EAGLES MEET IN SUPER BOWL LII TO SEE WHO WILL REACH THE TOP OF THE FOOTBALL WORLD.

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TOM BRADY
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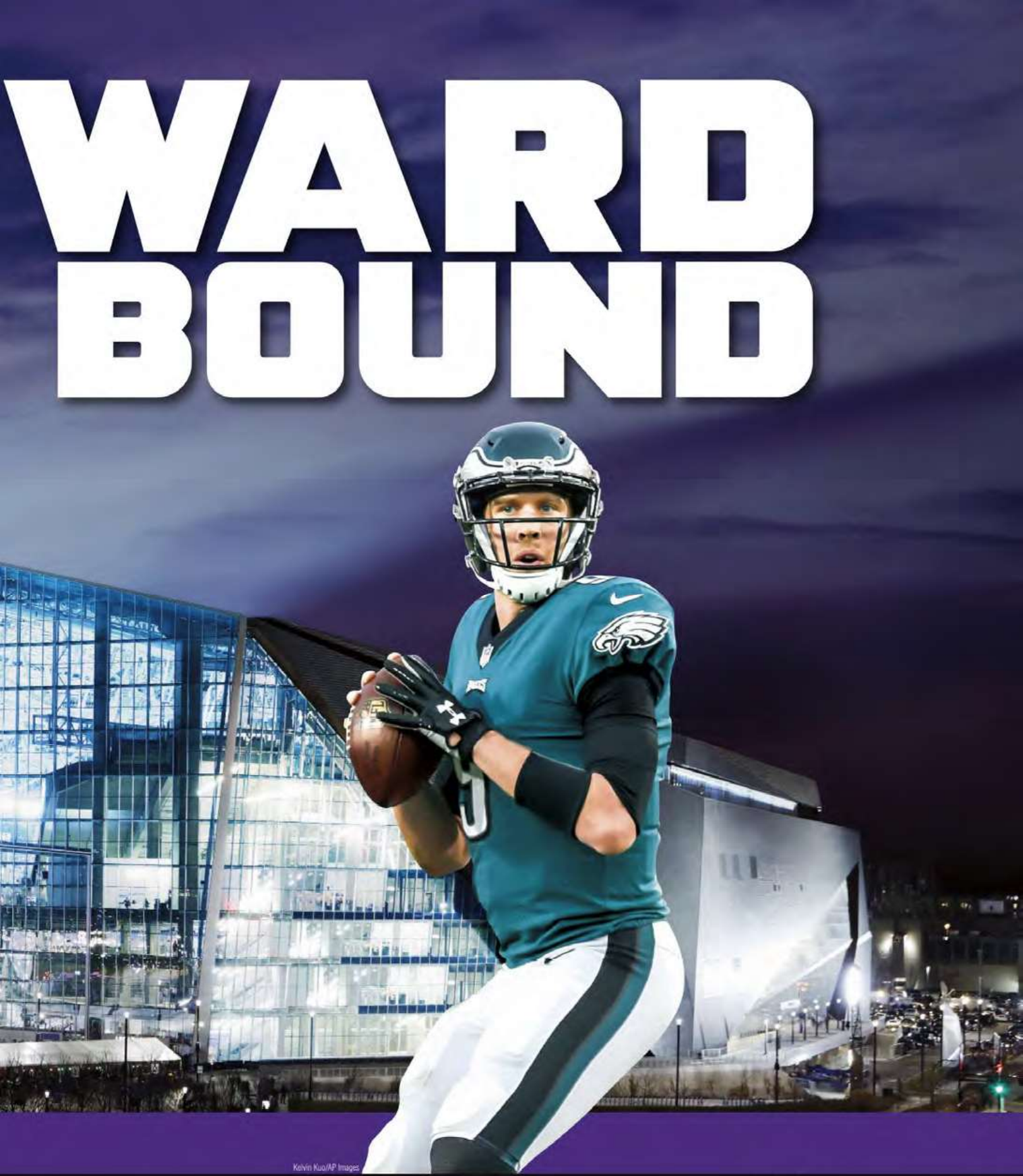

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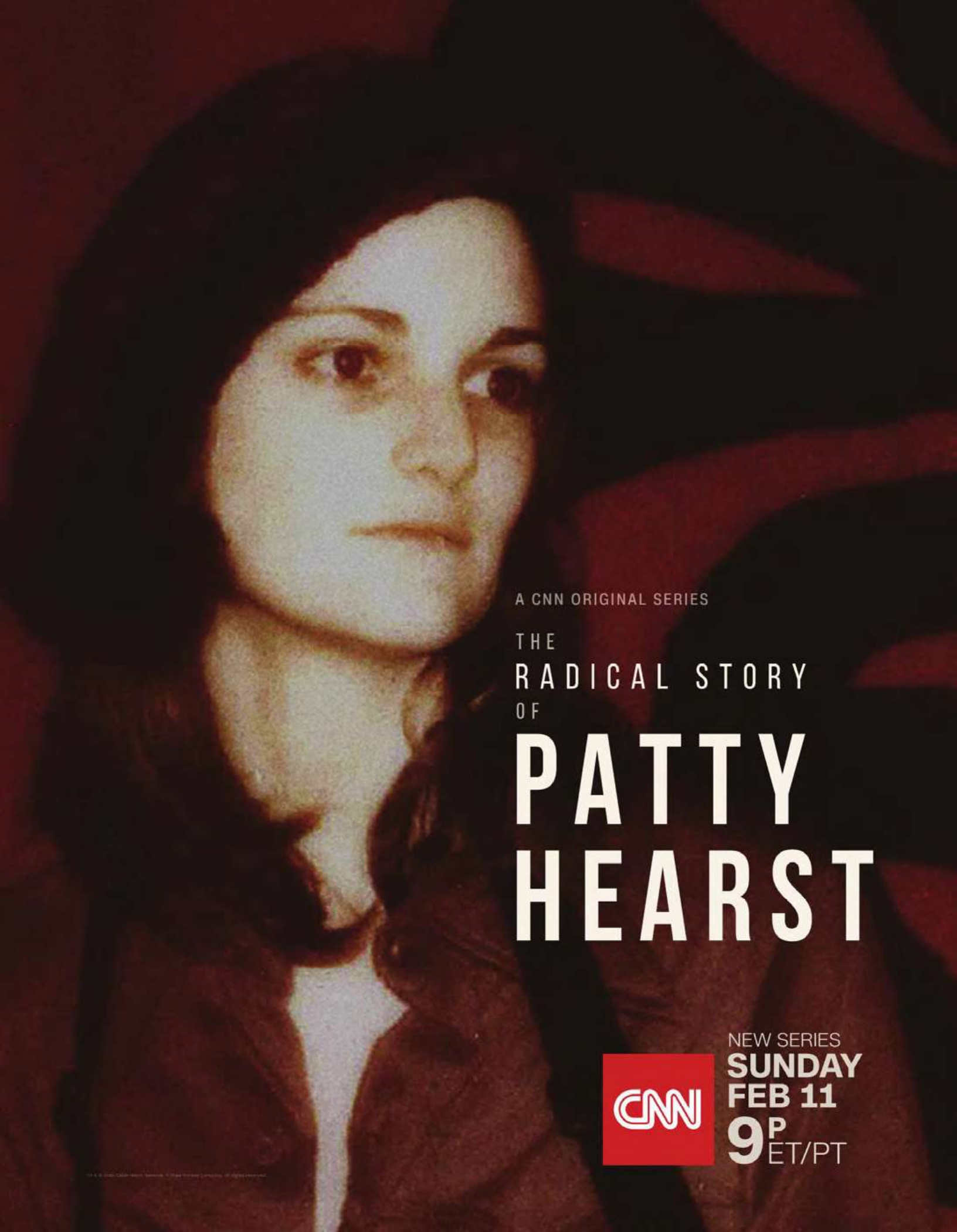
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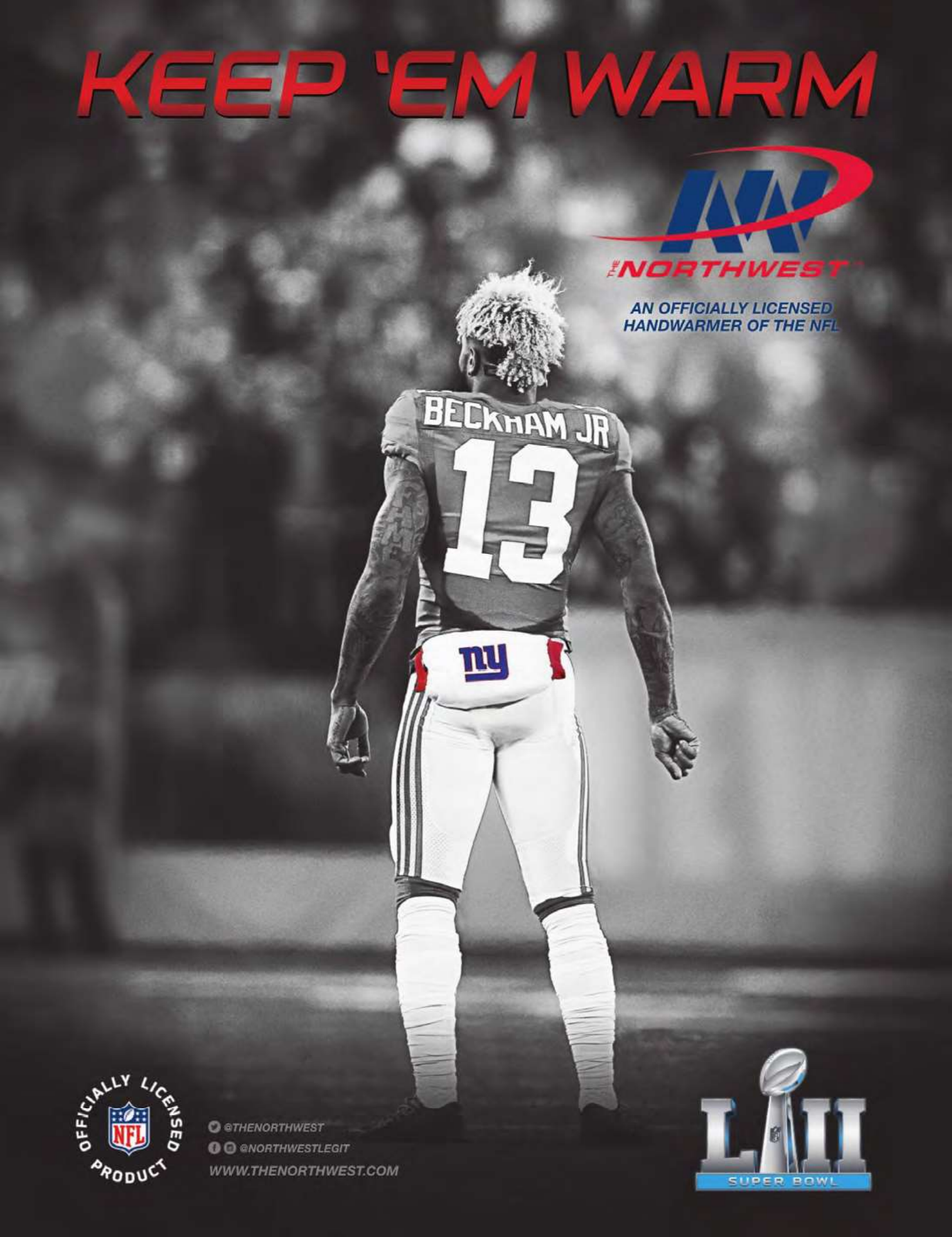
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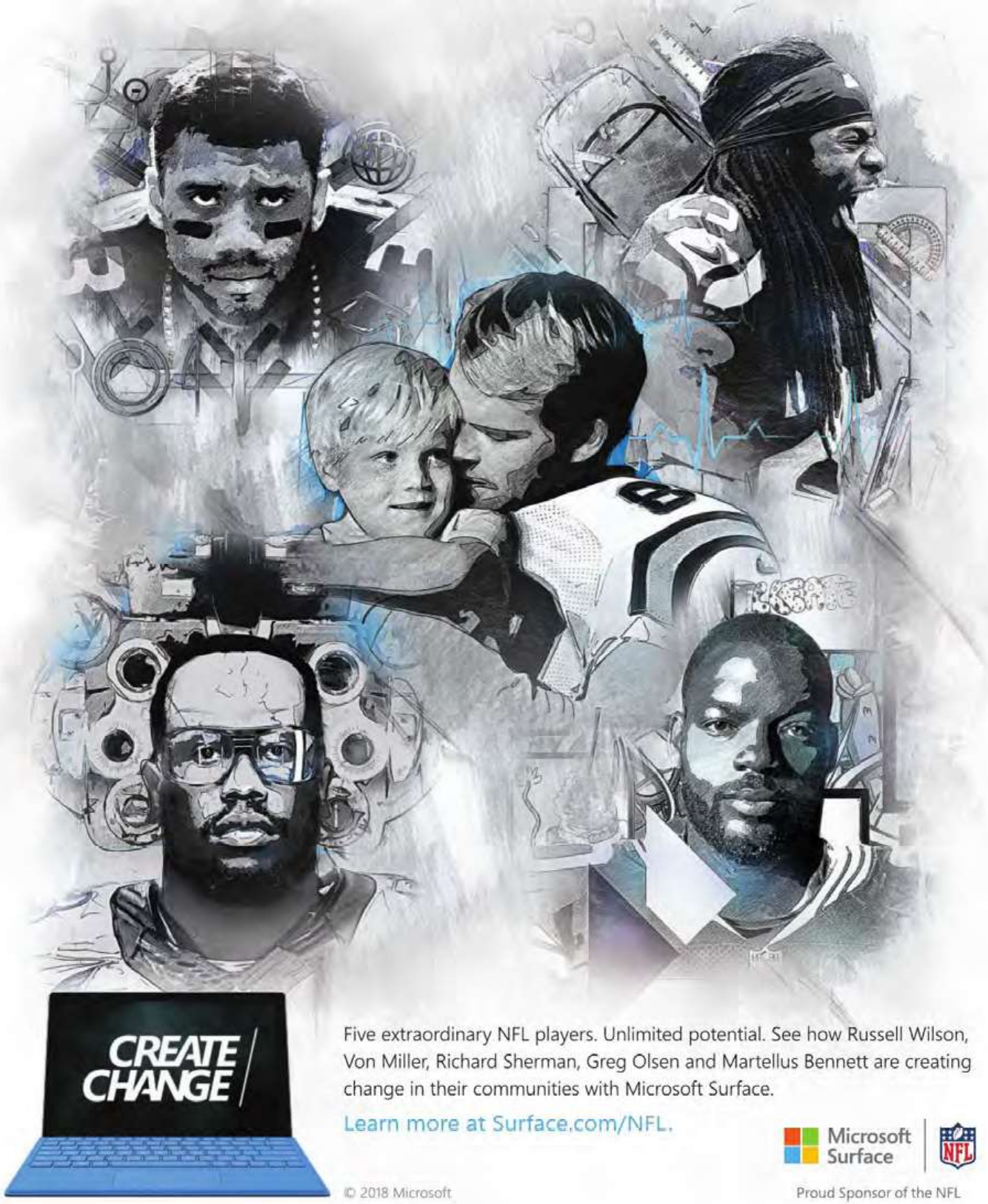

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PATRIOTS SEEKING A SIXTH TITLE

BY DON BANKS

By now, they play all season, every season, with a target on their backs, knowing they are judged differently than all other teams. The bar of expectation is set so high in New England that nothing short of a Super Bowl feels like a success.

Tom Brady continues to amaze with his high caliber of play. His five Super Bowl wins are tied for the most by any player in NFL history.

But while the final step of this 2017 NFL season is a familiar one for the dynasty from Foxborough, the journey to the Patriots' third Super Bowl appearance in four years – and an amazing eighth since 2001 – started with some troubling trends to overcome.

Through the season's first four weeks, the defending NFL champions weren't doing too much defending. Sitting at 2-2 in early October, New England ranked dead last in the league in total defense, giving up an average of 32 points and 457 yards per game. For a unit that led the NFL with just 15.6 points allowed per game in 2016, the struggles were a mystery.

It didn't help that New England was still dealing with a spate of defensive line injuries suffered during the preseason, or that free-agent cornerback Stephon Gilmore started slowly. When linebacker Dont'a Hightower went down for the season with a pectoral injury in late October, the Patriots were saddled with yet another challenge.

But resiliency remains New England's calling card, even 17 years into this epic run of dominance, and there was never any panic in the locker room. Beginning with a 19-14 win on a Thursday night in Tampa in Week 5, the Patriots regained their equilibrium on defense and started stringing together one impressive performance after another.

Suddenly, New England's supposed weak link became its strong suit, as the defense allowed 17 points or fewer in eight consecutive games. The Patriots won all eight.

And while their normally dynamic offense

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Nate Solder (left) and Rob Gronkowski are cornerstones of the Patriots' offense. Solder has been a starter at tackle since 2011; tight end Gronkowski has caught at least eight TDs five times in his career.

2017 PATRIOTS RESULTS (15-3)

Date	Opponent	Score	W/L
9/7	KANSAS CITY	27-42	L
9/17	New Orleans	36-20	W
9/24	HOUSTON	36-33	W
10/1	CAROLINA	30-33	L
10/5	Tampa Bay	19-14	W
10/15	N.Y. Jets	24-17	W
10/22	ATLANTA	23-7	W
10/29	L.A. CHARGERS	21-13	W
11/12	Denver	41-16	W
11/19	Oakland	33-8	W
11/26	MIAMI	35-17	W
12/3	Buffalo	23-3	W
12/11	Miami	20-27	L
12/17	Pittsburgh	27-24	W
12/24	BUFFALO	37-16	W
12/31	N.Y. JETS	26-6	W
AFC Playoffs			
1/13	TENNESSEE	35-14	W
1/21	JACKSONVILLE	24-20	W

only topped 24 points three times in that same span, it didn't matter. The Patriots were 10-2 by early December, springboarding the team to its NFL-record ninth consecutive division title. The Patriots' 13-3 regular-season mark and postseason success have reduced that slow start to a speck in the rear-view mirror, thanks in no small part to the steady hand and corrective work of head coach Bill Belichick and defensive coordinator Matt Patricia.

When all was said and done in the regular season, the Patriots' 18.5 points allowed per game ranked fifth overall in the NFL, nicely complementing the offense's 28.6 ppg (No. 2).

"Great football teams, they always finish," Patriots safety Duron Harmon said. "That's something we harped on, and I think it's the mindset we've had. We want to be the team that finishes."

OFFENSE

If his game has slipped any at the ripe old age of 40, as some contend, oh to be trapped in the kind of decline that Tom Brady personified this season. The 18th-year quarterback led the NFL in passing yards with 4,577, was third in touchdowns with 32, and was in the league's top five in both completion percentage (66.3) and yards per attempt (7.9).

Brady found his rhythm early in the season despite losing favorite target Julian Edelman to injury in August. And though he scuffled a bit down the stretch (six of his eight interceptions on the year came in a five-game span from Weeks 11-15), he still led the league with 286.1 passing yards per game and posted a passer rating of 102.8. As you'd expect, Brady's play has surged in the postseason, a fact driven home with his three-touchdown assault on the Titans in the Divisional round.

Having All-Pro tight end Rob Gronkowski back for a full season has eased Edelman's loss. Gronkowski is once again torching opposing secondaries, and compiled a team-best 69 catches for 1,084 yards and eight TDs during the regular season. Never was his value more apparent than on the game-deciding drive in the pivotal 27-24 victory at Pittsburgh in Week 15, when Brady found him repeatedly, completing three passes for 69 yards, plus the two-point conversion.

"Rob's been a great player since the day he arrived here," Brady said. "Teams have to really cover him. We've got to force teams to cover him."

Speed threat Brandin Cooks, acquired from New Orleans during the offseason, has emerged as a go-to option as well. He grabbed 65 passes for 1,082 yards and seven touchdowns during

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Malcolm Butler (left) and Trey Flowers take on big roles for the Patriots' defense. Butler, the fourth-year cornerback, had 55 tackles and defensed 12 passes, while Flowers had a team-high 6.5 sacks.

WINNING INGREDIENTS

TODAY'S NFL MAKES IT DIFFICULT to keep star players together on a team, especially one that has enjoyed as much success as the Patriots.

Head coach Bill Belichick and QB Tom Brady have been the constants during New England's amazing run that now features eight Super Bowl appearances over the past 17 years.

In that span, Brady has led the team in passing every year except 2008 (when he suffered a season-ending knee injury in the opening game). His offensive weapons, however, have changed with regularity. Eight players have led the team in receptions since 2001 – Deion Branch, Troy Brown, Reche Caldwell, Julian Edelman, David Givens, Rob Gronkowski, Randy Moss, and Wes Welker. That number is topped by the nine different players who have led them in rushing – LeGarrette Blount, Corey Dillon, Jonas Gray, BenJarvis Green-Ellis, Dion Lewis, Laurence Maroney, Sammy Morris, Stevan Ridley, and Antowain Smith.

Yet there has been stability at one other position: kicker. Only two players have taken on that role for the Patriots going all the way back to 1996. Adam Vinatieri was part of the team's first three Super Bowl titles, and since 2006, Stephen Gostkowski has handled those duties (except for eight games in 2010). He has made 87.6 percent of his career field goal attempts and led the NFL in field goals made three times while helping the Patriots to two more crowns.

Stephen Gostkowski

the year. With those two both hitting the 1,000-yard mark, the Patriots' passing game finished No. 2 overall in the league.

As usual, New England involves almost everyone on offense, often turning to secondary receiving weapons such as Danny Amendola and Chris Hogan as well as its deep supply of multi-purpose running backs. Dion Lewis took over the primary ball-carrier duties this season, and responded with a team-high 896 yards rushing and six touchdowns. He and backfield mates James White and Rex Burkhead each contributed at least 30 receptions, led by White's 56 catches for 429 yards and three TDs.

Similar to the overall team, New England's offensive line has improved markedly as the year's gone on. Brady was sacked 16 times in the first five regular-season games, but only 19 more over the final 11. Center David Andrews and right guard Shaq Mason have been stout, and left tackle Nate Solder and left guard Joe Thuney steadied their games in the season's second half. Only right tackle, where 2016 second-team All-Pro Marcus Cannon had his season ended by an ankle injury, has encountered any instability, with LaAdrian Waddle and Cameron Fleming sharing starts in relief.

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DEFENSE

There always has been a clear understanding of what is required from a defense on a Bill Belichick-coached team. Yards are never the measuring stick. Points and wins are the only metrics that matter.

As the field shortens, that's when the Patriots use their own end zone to their advantage to get more aggressive. While New England seems to give up some big-yardage games, they are usually among the league's better scoring defenses.

This season is a stark example of that philosophy. The Patriots ranked 29th overall defensively, surrendering 366 yards per game. But in the red zone, they tightened things up, ranking fourth in red zone TD percentage, allowing six points just 43.8 percent of the time.

The Patriots' defense remains a case of the whole being better than the sum of its parts. When the unit struggled early in the season, Patricia leaned on unsung players such as linebackers Kyle Van Noy and Elandon Roberts, defensive tackles Deatrich Wise Jr. and Malcom Brown, and cornerbacks Johnson Bademosi and Jonathan Jones for bursts of playmaking.

Up front, the pass rush has again been a unit-wide affair, with defensive end Trey Flowers (6.5) leading the team in sacks for a second year in a row. But five different players had at least 3.5 sacks, and New England received at least one sack from a whopping 16 defenders.

Similarly, pass defense is a team-driven effort, with the unit meshing as the season has progressed. Harmon grabbed four of the team's 12 interceptions, but Gilmore, Malcolm Butler, and veteran safeties Patrick Chung and Devin McCourty have been every bit as important to the secondary's success.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kicker Stephen Gostkowski is having one of his best seasons, finishing second in the NFL with 156 points scored and converting the league's longest field goal – a 62-yarder against Oakland. He made 37 of 40 field goals in the regular season, second only to his 38 in 2013.

Punter Ryan Allen impressively saw just 23 of his 58 punts returned – and even then for a paltry average of 4.6 yards – the lowest total in team history since 1970.

Dion Lewis handles kickoff return duties and fashioned a strong 24.8-yard average on 23 returns, including a 103-yard touchdown in

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS ALL-TIME PLAYOFF RESULTS

(34 WINS, 19 LOSSES)

Year	Playoffs	Location	Final	W/L
1963	AFL Divisional	at Buffalo	26-8	W
	AFL Championship	at San Diego Chargers	10-51	L
1976	AFC Divisional	at Oakland	21-24	L
1978	AFC Divisional	Houston Oilers	14-31	L
1982	AFC Wild Card	at Miami	13-28	L
1985	AFC Wild Card	at N.Y. Jets	26-14	W
	AFC Divisional	at L.A. Raiders	27-20	W
	AFC Championship	at Miami	31-14	W
	Super Bowl XX	**Chicago**	**10-46**	**L**
1986	AFC Divisional	at Denver	17-22	L
1994	AFC Wild Card	at Cleveland	13-20	L
1996	AFC Divisional	Pittsburgh	28-3	W
	AFC Championship	Jacksonville	20-6	W
	Super Bowl XXXI	**Green Bay**	**21-35**	**L**
1997	AFC Wild Card	Miami	17-3	W
	AFC Divisional	at Pittsburgh	6-7	L
1998	AFC Wild Card	at Jacksonville	10-25	L
2001	AFC Divisional	Oakland	16-13 (OT)	W
	AFC Championship	at Pittsburgh	24-17	W
	Super Bowl XXXVI	**St. Louis Rams**	**20-17**	**W**
2003	AFC Divisional	Tennessee	17-14	W
	AFC Championship	Indianapolis	24-14	W
	Super Bowl XXXVIII	**Carolina**	**32-29**	**W**
2004	AFC Divisional	Indianapolis	20-3	W
	AFC Championship	at Pittsburgh	41-27	W
	Super Bowl XXXIX	**Philadelphia**	**24-21**	**W**
2005	AFC Wild Card	Jacksonville	28-3	W
	AFC Divisional	at Denver	13-27	L
2006	AFC Wild Card	N.Y. Jets	37-16	W
	AFC Divisional	at San Diego Chargers	24-21	W
	AFC Championship	at Indianapolis	34-38	L
2007	AFC Divisional	Jacksonville	31-20	W
	AFC Championship	San Diego Chargers	21-12	W
	Super Bowl XLII	**N.Y. Giants**	**14-17**	**L**
2009	AFC Wild Card	Baltimore	14-33	L
2010	AFC Divisional	N.Y. Jets	21-28	L
2011	AFC Divisional	Denver	45-10	W
	AFC Championship	Baltimore	23-20	W
	Super Bowl XLVI	**N.Y. Giants**	**17-21**	**L**
2012	AFC Divisional	Houston	41-28	W
	AFC Championship	Baltimore	13-28	L
2013	AFC Divisional	Indianapolis	43-22	W
	AFC Championship	at Denver	16-26	L
2014	AFC Divisional	Baltimore	35-31	W
	AFC Championship	Indianapolis	45-7	W
	Super Bowl XLIX	**Seattle**	**28-24**	**W**
2015	AFC Divisional	Kansas City	27-20	W
	AFC Championship	at Denver	18-20	L
2016	AFC Divisional	Houston	34-16	W
	AFC Championship	Pittsburgh	36-17	W
	Super Bowl LI	**Atlanta**	**34-28 (OT)**	**W**
2017	AFC Divisional	Tennessee	35-14	W
	AFC Championship	Jacksonville	24-20	W

a Week 10 win at Denver. Danny Amendola is the team's primary punt returner, and averaged 8.6 yards on 27 returns in the regular season.

THE GAME PLAN

Making the Super Bowl is never routine, but for New England it has become a habit. The Patriots are seeking their third Super Bowl title in four seasons, which would provide a sweet matching bookend for Belichick and Brady, given they won three in a four-year span (2001-04) near the beginning of their historic tenure. It would also give the franchise six Super Bowl championships overall, tying the Steelers' NFL record.

How will they go about it? Every way they can. No team attacks an opponent's weakness or takes away an opponent's strength better than Belichick's Patriots. On offense, that shape-shifting makes it difficult to know not only the game plan, but who will be featured on the ground and through the air. And if something isn't working, offensive coordinator Josh McDaniels will try something else. With Brady behind center, rarely do they not exploit a team's fatal flaw.

Defensively, it's a bit easier to figure out. New England will be physical from the start and jump at the chance to force a mistake, but without exposing itself to a big play. The Patriots are more than willing to give up yards and even field goals, knowing their offense's ability to score points in bunches.

Another Super Bowl victory for Brady would make him No. 1 all time in that category, and Belichick's sixth title would only further distance him from his coaching brethren.

"You don't take it for granted," Brady said of the team's mind-boggling playoff success. "It's hard to get to this point. You make it through a whole season and have a chance to compete for everything at stake. It's pretty cool for all of us."

New England plays all season with the pressure to reach Super Bowl Sunday, and by now the Patriots thrive on the opportunity to make even more history. They are the NFL's gold standard, and they relish the chance to prove it once again.

__Don Banks__ has covered the NFL since 1990 and currently is a contributor to The Athletic, Bleacher Report, *and Patriots.com, where he writes his popular __Snap Judgments__ column on Sundays.*

AFC CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

NEW ENGLAND 24
Jacksonville 20

IT'S A STORY WE'VE SEEN SO MANY TIMES, WE KNOW IT BY HEART.

With his team trailing by 10 points in the fourth quarter, QB Tom Brady directed two clutch drives – both ending with touchdown passes to Danny Amendola – to knock off the feisty Jaguars for the AFC title and lead the Patriots to their 10th Super Bowl appearance in franchise history, the most of any team.

Until that point, Jacksonville gave the hosts everything they could handle, and owned a 20-10 lead after a Josh Lambo field goal moments into the fourth quarter. But it's during the final 15 minutes when Brady seems to shine the brightest; it was the eighth fourth-quarter playoff comeback of his career, an NFL record.

Jacksonville had the momentum early, scoring TDs on back-to-back time-consuming drives to lead, 14-3. First, Jaguars QB Blake Bortles lofted a four-yard scoring toss to Marcedes Lewis – the lone player remaining from Jacksonville's 2007 playoff team – and Leonard Fournette followed with a four-yard scoring run.

The Jaguars were on the move again just before halftime, but the Patriots' defense held to put the ball back in Brady's hands. He promptly marched his team 85 yards in just 1:09, with James White's one-yard TD run around the left side making it 14-10 at intermission.

GILLETTE STADIUM
Foxborough, Mass. **Jan. 21, 2018**

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Jacksonville	0	14	3	3	20
New England	3	7	0	14	24

1st Quarter
NE Gostkowski 31 FG, 5:39

2nd Quarter
JAX Lewis 4 pass from Bortles (Lambo kick), 0:45
JAX Fournette 4 run (Lambo kick), 7:54
NE White 1 run (Gostkowski kick), 14:05

3rd Quarter
JAX Lambo 54 FG, 4:37

4th Quarter
JAX Lambo 43 FG, 0:08
NE Amendola 9 pass from Brady, (Gostkowski kick), 6:16
NE Amendola 4 pass from Brady, (Gostkowski kick), 12:12

Brady's fourth-quarter heroics started with an 85-yard drive, which featured the play of the game: a third-and-18 completion to Amendola that brought the ball to midfield. Four plays later, the Patriots were in the end zone.

The teams traded punts, but New England benefited from the exchange of field position, taking possession at the Jaguars 30 after Amendola's 20-yard return. On a second-and-goal at the Jacksonville 4, Brady bulleted a pass to Amendola in the back of the end zone for the go-ahead points with 2:48 remaining. The Jaguars had a final chance, driving to the New England 43-yard line, but Stephon Gilmore knocked away a fourth-down pass.

For the game, Brady completed 26 of 38 passes for 290 yards, 138 of those coming in the fourth quarter. Amendola, the game's unofficial MVP, had seven receptions for 84 yards.

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ROBERT KRAFT Chairman and CEO

ROBERT KRAFT attended his first Patriots game the year of the franchise's inception in 1960 and became a Patriots season ticket member when they moved to Foxborough in 1971. On Jan. 21, 1994, after 23 years as a season ticket member, Kraft fulfilled a lifelong dream when he bought his hometown franchise. That day, he not only kept the team from relocating, but also promised to bring a championship home to New England. In the 24 seasons since, he has delivered on that pledge several times over, as the Patriots have won five Super Bowl titles, nine conference championships, and 17 division crowns.

Under Kraft's leadership, the Patriots have transformed from one of the league's worst clubs to one of the most successful franchises in NFL history. During the Kraft era, the Patriots own the NFL's best win-loss record (298-129) and have won an NFL-best five Super Bowls, two more than any other team. The Patriots also have won 10 conference crowns, the most in NFL history; nine of those titles are during Kraft's 24 years of ownership. The Patriots' .698 winning percentage is not only the best in the NFL during Kraft's ownership, but also the highest winning percentage across all five major American professional sports.

Kraft has served on many of the NFL's most prominent committees and is regarded as one of the league's most influential owners. In 2011, he was principally involved in the negotiations with the NFLPA to end the NFL labor dispute. Many people involved in the negotiations credited Kraft for his role in getting the deal done.

Later that same year, in his role as chairman of the Broadcast Committee, Kraft helped ensure NFL fans of another decade of football without interruption by negotiating the long-term extensions of the CBS, FOX, and NBC contracts, as well as extensions of the broadcasting agreements with DirecTV and Comcast.

Kraft is the founder, chairman, and CEO of the Kraft Group, which is based in the Patriots' home of Foxborough, Mass. The Kraft Group is the holding company of the Kraft family's many businesses, with interests concentrated in the following areas: manufacturing of paper and packaging, international distribution of forest products, sports and entertainment, real estate development, private equity investing, and philanthropy.

Kraft began his business career with the Rand-Whitney Group, Inc. of Worcester, Mass., a company that converts paper into packaging for various industries. He later acquired the company. In 1972, he founded International Forest Products, a trader of paper commodities that now does business in 95 countries.

Kraft is on the executive committee for the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, where he established the Robert K. Kraft Family Blood Donor Center. Over the past five decades, the Krafts have been one of New England's most philanthropic families, donating hundreds of millions in support of local charities and civic affairs. The Krafts pledged $25 million to Partners HealthCare to launch the Kraft Center for Community Health, an initiative designed to improve the leadership of and access to quality health care at community centers in Massachusetts, with the goal of expanding the model nationally. The Krafts recently expanded their investment in community health care with a mobile CareZone program designed to engage individuals in our communities who are struggling with addiction and complex health conditions. In 2015, Kraft received the Distinguished Citizen Award from the Congressional Medal of Honor Society in recognition for his support of our country's armed forces and shared ideals.

Bob Kraft is greatly admired for his work in the community.

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS TEAM OFFICIALS

ROBERT KRAFT
Chairman and CEO

JONATHAN A. KRAFT
President

DAN KRAFT
Director

JOSH KRAFT
President of New England Patriots Charitable Foundation

JENNIFER FERRON
Chief Marketing Officer

JIM NOLAN
Chief Operating Officer

JON BENGTSON
Field Superintendent

ROBIN BOUDREAU
Vice President of Human Resources

MARK BRIGGS
Chief Operating Officer of Team Ops/Chief NFL Compliance Officer

NICK CASERIO
Director of Player Personnel

BILL CHRISTIANSEN
Senior Director of Security Operations

JIM COBERY
General Counsel, The Kraft Group

PAT CURLEY
Vice President of Information Technology

JIMMY DEE
Video Director

JACK EASTERBY
Character Coach/ Team Development

JESSICA GELMAN
CEO Kraft Analytics Group (KAGR)

ROBYN GLASER
Vice President, The Kraft Group and Club Counsel, the New England Patriots

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Football Operations Assistant

RICHARD MILLER
Research Director

BRYAN MORRY
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Equipment Manager

DAN MURPHY
Vice President of Stadium Business Development & External Affairs

BERJ NAJARIAN
Director of Football/ Head Coach Administration

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Vice President of Corporate Relationships

MATT PIERKARSKI
Senior Director of Parking

MATT SMITH
Senior Executive Producer of Broadcast Production

TRACY SORMANTI
Cheerleader Director

JASON STONE
Senior Director of Stadium Operations

ANDRE TIPPETT
Executive Director of Community Affairs

ALI TOWLE
Senior Director of Brand & Fan Experience

JIM WHALEN
Head Athletic Trainer

DAVID WHEELER
Vice President of Food & Beverage

JIM WILSON
Vice President of Finance/Ticketing

BILL BELICHICK Coach

BILL BELICHICK, who is completing his 43rd season as a coach in the NFL and 18th at the helm of the New England Patriots, is the only head coach in NFL history to win five Super Bowl titles.

Patriots Chairman and CEO Robert Kraft acquired Belichick in a trade with the New York Jets in 2000. By 2004, Belichick had led the Patriots to three Super Bowl titles, the first time in NFL history that a head coach had won three Super Bowls in four years. A win in Super Bowl LII would repeat that feat, and place Belichick with George Halas and Curley Lambeau as the only head coaches in NFL history with six league titles.

Belichick ranks third in the NFL with 278 career wins, including an NFL-record 28 in the postseason, and is 241-83 (.743) with the Patriots, including postseason. He has guided New England to 15 AFC East Division titles, and his current streak of nine consecutive crowns is an NFL record. In 2007, he led the Patriots to the fourth undefeated, untied regular season in NFL history and the first since the establishment of a 16-game schedule in 1978.

Belichick is a three-time Associated Press NFL Coach of the Year (2003, 2007, 2010). His first head coaching position was with the Cleveland Browns from 1991-95, a tenure that included a playoff berth in 1994.

Born April 16, 1952, Belichick lettered in football, lacrosse, and squash at Wesleyan University, where he earned his bachelor's degree in economics. His father, Steve, coached for 33 years at the Naval Academy.

ASSISTANT COACHES

BRIAN BELICHICK..... Coaching Assistant
STEVE BELICHICK..... Safeties
JOSH BOYER..... Cornerbacks
MOSES CABRERA..... Head Strength & Conditioning
NICK CALEY..... Tight Ends
DeMARCUS COVINGTON..... Coaching Assistant
BRENDAN DALY..... Defensive Line
IVAN FEARS..... Running Backs
BRIAN FLORES..... Linebackers
JAMES HARDY..... Assistant Strength & Conditioning
JOE JUDGE..... Special Teams
JOSH McDANIELS..... Offensive Coordinator/Quarterbacks
CHAD O'SHEA..... Wide Receivers
MATT PATRICIA..... Defensive Coordinator
MIKE PELLEGRINO..... Coaching Assistant
COLE POPOVICH..... Coaching Assistant
DANTE SCARNECCHIA..... Offensive Line
JERRY SCHUPLINSKI..... Assistant Quarterbacks
RAY VENTRONE..... Assistant Special Teams

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS ALPHABETICAL ROSTER

NO	PLAYER	POS	HT	WT	BIRTH DATE	NFL EXP	COLLEGE	HOW ACQUIRED
83	**Allen**, Dwayne	TE	6-3	265	2/24/90	6	Clemson	T (IND) '17
6	**Allen**, Ryan	P	6-2	220	2/28/90	5	Louisiana Tech	FA '13
80	**Amendola**, Danny	WR	5-11	190	11/2/85	9	Texas Tech	UFA (STL) '13
60	**Andrews**, David	C	6-3	295	7/10/92	3	Georgia	FA '15
29	**Bademosi**, Johnson	CB	6-0	206	7/23/90	6	Stanford	T (DET) '17
38	**Bolden**, Brandon	RB	5-11	220	1/26/90	6	Mississippi	FA '12
12	**Brady**, Tom	QB	6-4	225	8/3/77	18	Michigan	D6b '00
97	**Branch**, Alan	DL	6-6	350	12/29/84	11	Michigan	FA '14
85	**Britt**, Kenny	WR	6-3	223	9/18/88	9	Rutgers	FA '17
90	**Brown**, Malcom	DL	6-2	320	2/2/94	3	Texas	D1 '15
34	**Burkhead**, Rex	RB	5-10	210	7/2/90	5	Nebraska	UFA (CIN) '17
70	**Butler**, Adam	DL	6-5	300	4/12/94	R	Vanderbilt	FA '17
21	**Butler**, Malcolm	CB	5-11	190	3/2/90	4	West Alabama	FA '14
49	**Cardona**, Joe	LS	6-3	245	4/16/92	3	Navy	D5 '15
23	**Chung**, Patrick	S	5-11	215	8/19/87	9	Oregon	FA '14
14	**Cooks**, Brandin	WR	5-10	189	9/25/93	4	Oregon State	T (NO) '17
74	**Croston**, Cole	OL	6-5	315	12/25/93	R	Iowa	FA '17
46	**Develin**, James	FB	6-3	255	7/23/88	5	Brown	FA '12
13	**Dorsett**, Phillip	WR	5-10	185	1/5/93	3	Miami (Fla.)	T (IND) '17
71	**Fleming**, Cameron	OL	6-6	320	9/3/92	4	Stanford	D4c '14
59	**Flowers**, Marquis	LB	6-3	250	2/16/92	4	Arizona	T (CIN) '17
98	**Flowers**, Trey	DL	6-2	265	8/16/93	3	Arkansas	D4a '15
35	**Gillislee**, Mike	RB	5-11	219	11/1/90	5	Florida	RFA (BUF) '17
24	**Gilmore**, Stephon	CB	6-1	190	9/19/90	6	South Carolina	UFA (BUF) '17
3	**Gostkowski**, Stephen	K	6-1	215	1/28/84	12	Memphis	D4b '06
50	**Grigsby**, Nicholas	LB	6-2	230	7/2/92	2	Pittsburgh	FA '17
96	**Grissom**, Geneo	DL	6-4	265	6/4/92	3	Oklahoma	D3 '15
87	**Gronkowski**, Rob	TE	6-6	265	5/14/89	8	Arizona	D2a '10
93	**Guy**, Lawrence	DL	6-4	305	3/17/90	7	Arizona State	UFA (BAL) '17
30	**Harmon**, Duron	DB	6-1	205	1/24/91	5	Rutgers	D3b '13
45	**Harris**, David	LB	6-2	250	1/21/84	11	Michigan	FA '17
92	**Harrison**, James	LB	6-0	242	5/4/78	15	Kent State	FA '17
15	**Hogan**, Chris	WR	6-1	210	10/24/87	5	Monmouth	RFA (BUF) '16
47	**Hollister**, Jacob	TE	6-4	239	11/18/93	R	Wyoming	FA '17
2	**Hoyer**, Brian	QB	6-2	215	10/13/85	9	Michigan State	FA '17
94	**Jean Francois**, Ricky	DL	6-3	313	11/23/86	9	Louisiana State	FA '17
75	**Karras**, Ted	OL	6-4	305	3/15/93	2	Illinois	D6c '16
30	**King**, Brandon	DB	6-2	220	6/8/93	3	Auburn	FA '15
55	**Lee**, Eric	DL	6-3	260	8/6/94	1	South Florida	FA '17
33	**Lewis**, Dion	RB	5-8	195	9/27/90	6	Pittsburgh	FA '15
69	**Mason**, Shaq	OL	6-1	310	8/28/93	3	Georgia Tech	D4c '15
32	**McCourty**, Devin	DB	5-10	195	8/13/87	8	Rutgers	D1 '10
17	**Reedy**, Bernard	WR	5-9	175	12/31/91	1	Toledo	FA '17
37	**Richards**, Jordan	DB	5-11	210	1/21/93	3	Stanford	D2 '15
52	**Roberts**, Elandon	LB	6-0	235	4/22/94	2	Houston	D6b '16
25	**Rowe**, Eric	DB	6-1	205	10/3/92	3	Utah	T (PHI) '16
18	**Slater**, Matthew	WR	6-0	205	9/9/85	10	UCLA	D5 '08
77	**Solder**, Nate	T	6-8	325	4/12/88	7	Colorado	D1 '11
62	**Thuney**, Joe	OL	6-5	305	11/18/92	2	North Carolina State	D3a '16
53	**Van Noy**, Kyle	LB	6-3	243	3/26/91	4	BYU	T (DET) '16
68	**Waddle**, LaAdrian	OL	6-6	315	7/21/91	5	Texas Tech	CW (DET) '15
28	**White**, James	RB	5-10	205	2/3/92	4	Wisconsin	D4b '14
91	**Wise Jr.**, Deatrich	DL	6-5	271	7/26/94	R	Arkansas	D4 '17

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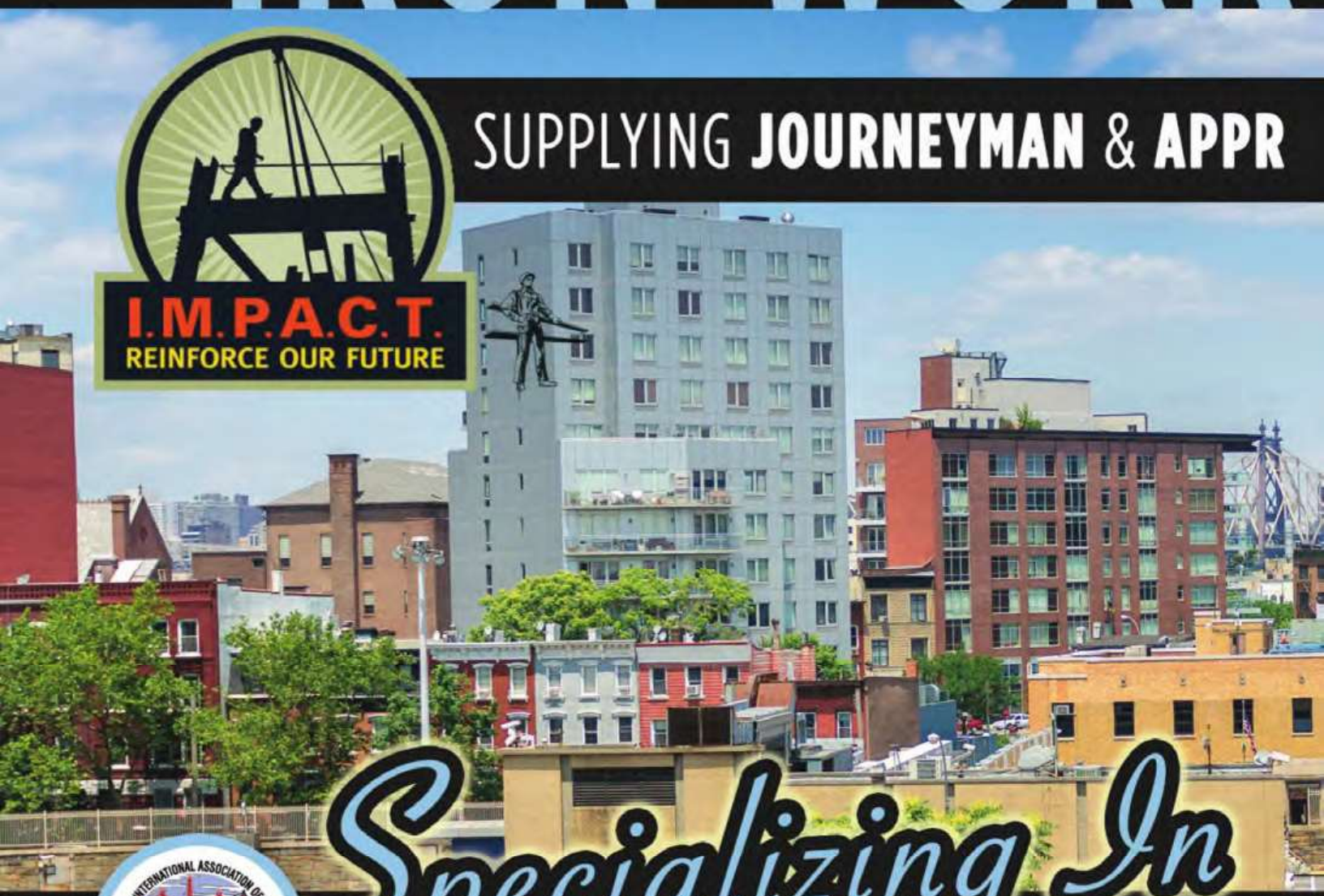
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NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS 2017 AFC CHAMPIONS

Dwayne Allen (83)
Tight End

Ryan Allen (6)
Punter

Danny Amendola (80)
Wide Receiver

David Andrews (60)
Center

Johnson Bademosi (29)
Cornerback

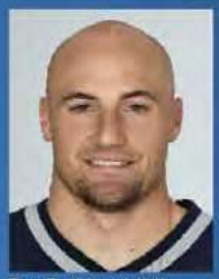
Brandon Bolden (38)
Running Back

Tom Brady (12)
Quarterback

Alan Branch (97)
Defensive Lineman

Kenny Britt (85)
Wide Receiver

Malcom Brown (90)
Defensive Lineman



Rex Burkhead (34)
Running Back

Adam Butler (70)
Defensive Lineman

Malcolm Butler (21)
Cornerback

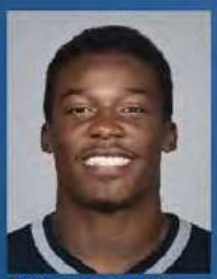
Joe Cardona (49)
Long Snapper

Patrick Chung (23)
Safety

Brandin Cooks (14)
Wide Receiver

Cole Croston (74)
Offensive Lineman

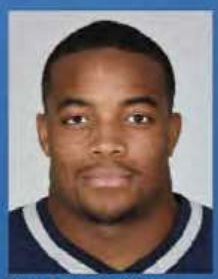
James Develin (46)
Fullback



Phillip Dorsett (13)
Wide Receiver

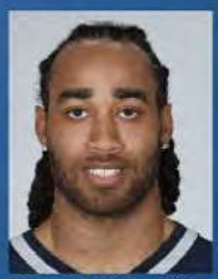
Cameron Fleming (71)
Offensive Lineman

Marquis Flowers (59)
Linebacker

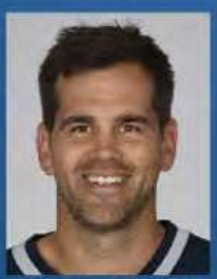


Trey Flowers (98)
Defensive Lineman

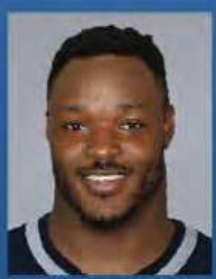
Mike Gillislee (35)
Running Back



Stephon Gilmore (24)
Cornerback



Stephen Gostkowski (3)
Kicker



Nicholas Grigsby (50)
Linebacker

Geneo Grissom (96)
Defensive Lineman

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Rob Gronkowski (87)
Tight End

Lawrence Guy (93)
Defensive Lineman

Duron Harmon (30)
Defensive Back

David Harris (45)
Linebacker

James Harrison (92)
Linebacker

Chris Hogan (15)
Wide Receiver

Jacob Hollister (47)
Tight End

Brian Hoyer (2)
Quarterback

Ricky Jean Francois (94)
Defensive Lineman

Ted Karras (75)
Offensive Lineman

Brandon King (36)
Defensive Back

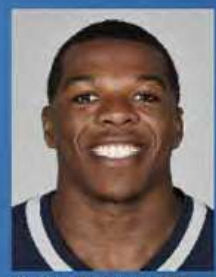
Eric Lee (55)
Defensive Lineman

Dion Lewis (33)
Running Back

Shaq Mason (69)
Offensive Lineman

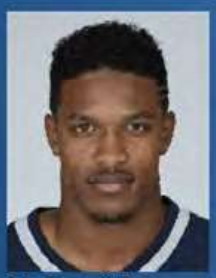
Devin McCourty (32)
Defensive Back

Bernard Reedy (17)
Wide Receiver



Jordan Richards (37)
Defensive Back

Elandon Roberts (52)
Linebacker



Eric Rowe (25)
Defensive Back

Matthew Slater (18)
Wide Receiver

Nate Solder (77)
Tackle

Joe Thuney (62)
Offensive Lineman

Kyle Van Noy (53)
Linebacker

LaAdrian Waddle (68)
Offensive Lineman

James White (28)
Running Back

Deatrich Wise Jr. (91)
Defensive Lineman

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NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS
STATS/ROSTER/LINEUPS

STATISTICAL LEADERS

PASSING	COMP-ATT	PCT	YDS	TD	INT	RTNG
TOM **BRADY**	385-581	66.3	4577	32	8	102.8

RUSHING	ATT	YDS	AVG	LONG	TD
DION **LEWIS**	180	896	5.0	44	6
MIKE **GILLISLEE**	104	383	3.7	16	5

RECEIVING	NO	YDS	AVG	LONG	TD
ROB **GRONKOWSKI**	69	1084	15.7	53	8
BRANDIN **COOKS**	65	1082	16.6	64	7
DANNY **AMENDOLA**	61	659	10.8	27	2
JAMES **WHITE**	56	429	7.7	27	3
CHRIS **HOGAN**	34	439	12.9	47	5
DION **LEWIS**	32	214	6.7	20	3

DEFENSE	TACKLES	ASSISTS	TOTAL	SACKS	PD	FF
DEVIN **McCOURTY**	77	17	94	1	5	0
PATRICK **CHUNG**	68	11	79	0	9	0
KYLE **VAN NOY**	58	15	73	5.5	2	0
ELANDON **ROBERTS**	45	22	67	2	1	0
TREY **FLOWERS**	44	17	61	6.5	3	2
MALCOLM **BUTLER**	55	5	60	1	12	3
LAWRENCE **GUY**	35	23	58	1	1	0
STEPHON **GILMORE**	47	3	50	0	9	0

INTERCEPTIONS	NO	YDS	AVG	LONG	TD
DURON **HARMON**	4	12	3.0	12	0
STEPHON **GILMORE**	2	59	29.5	39	0
MALCOLM **BUTLER**	2	-1	-0.5	1	0

KICK RETURNS	RET	YDS	AVG	LONG	TD
DION **LEWIS**	23	570	24.8	103	1

PUNT RETURNS	RET	FC	AVG	LONG	TD
DANNY **AMENDOLA**	27	18	8.6	40	0

PUNTING	NO	AVG	NET	TCHBK	IN/20	LONG
RYAN **ALLEN**	58	43.4	40.5	3	24	60

FIELD GOALS	TOTAL	1-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+
STEPHEN **GOSTKOWSKI**	37-40	0-0	16-16	9-9	8-11	4-4

OFFENSIVE DEPTH CHART

WR	14	**BRANDIN COOKS**
	80	DANNY AMENDOLA
LT	77	**NATE SOLDER**
	68	LaADRIAN WADDLE
LG	62	**JOE THUNEY**
	74	COLE CROSTON
C	60	**DAVID ANDREWS**
	75	TED KARRAS
RG	69	**SHAQ MASON**
	75	TED KARRAS
RT	71	**CAMERON FLEMING**
	68	LaADRIAN WADDLE
TE	87	**ROB GRONKOWSKI**
	83	DWAYNE ALLEN
WR	15	**CHRIS HOGAN**
	13	PHILLIP DORSETT
QB	12	**TOM BRADY**
	2	BRIAN HOYER
RB	33	**DION LEWIS**
	34	REX BURKHEAD
RB	28	**JAMES WHITE**
	35	MIKE GILLISLEE

DEFENSIVE DEPTH CHART

LE	93	**ERIC LEE**
	91	DEATRICH WISE JR.
DT	93	**LAWRENCE GUY**
	97	ALAN BRANCH
DT	90	**MALCOM BROWN**
	94	RICKY JEAN FRANCOIS
RE	98	**TREY FLOWERS**
	70	ADAM BUTLER
LB	53	**KYLE VAN NOY**
	59	MARQUIS FLOWERS
LB	52	**ELANDON ROBERTS**
	45	DAVID HARRIS
LCB	21	**MALCOLM BUTLER**
	29	JOHNSON BADEMOSI
RCB	24	**STEPHON GILMORE**
	25	ERIC ROWE
S	23	**PATRICK CHUNG**
	37	JORDAN RICHARDS
S	32	**DEVIN McCOURTY**
	36	BRANDON KING
S	30	**DURON HARMON**

SPECIALISTS DEPTH CHART

K	3	**STEPHEN GOSTKOWSKI**
P	6	**RYAN ALLEN**
H	6	**RYAN ALLEN**
LS	49	**JOE CARDONA**
KR	33	**DION LEWIS**
	18	MATTHEW SLATER
PR	80	**DANNY AMENDOLA**
	23	PATRICK CHUNG

NUMERICAL ROSTER

2	BRIAN HOYER	QB
3	STEPHEN GOSTKOWSKI	K
6	RYAN ALLEN	P
12	TOM BRADY	QB
13	PHILLIP DORSETT	WR
14	BRANDIN COOKS	WR
15	CHRIS HOGAN	WR
17	BERNARD REEDY	WR
18	MATTHEW SLATER	WR
21	MALCOLM BUTLER	CB
23	PATRICK CHUNG	S
24	STEPHON GILMORE	CB
25	ERIC ROWE	DB
28	JAMES WHITE	RB
29	JOHNSON BADEMOSI	CB
30	DURON HARMON	DB
32	DEVIN McCOURTY	DB
33	DION LEWIS	RB
34	REX BURKHEAD	RB
35	MIKE GILLISLEE	RB
36	BRANDON KING	DB
37	JORDAN RICHARDS	DB
38	BRANDON BOLDEN	RB
45	DAVID HARRIS	LB
46	JAMES DEVELIN	FB
47	JACOB HOLLISTER	TE
49	JOE CARDONA	LS
50	NICHOLAS GRISSEY	LB
52	ELANDON ROBERTS	LB
53	KYLE VAN NOY	LB
55	ERIC LEE	DL
59	MARQUIS FLOWERS	LB
60	DAVID ANDREWS	C
62	JOE THUNEY	OL
68	LaADRIAN WADDLE	OL
69	SHAQ MASON	OL
70	ADAM BUTLER	DL
71	CAMERON FLEMING	OL
74	COLE CROSTON	OL
75	TED KARRAS	OL
77	NATE SOLDER	T
80	DANNY AMENDOLA	WR
83	DWAYNE ALLEN	TE
85	KENNY BRITT	WR
87	ROB GRONKOWSKI	TE
90	MALCOM BROWN	DL
91	DEATRICH WISE JR.	DL
92	JAMES HARRISON	LB
93	LAWRENCE GUY	DL
94	RICKY JEAN FRANCOIS	DL
96	GENEO GRISSOM	DL
97	ALAN BRANCH	DL
98	TREY FLOWERS	DL

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PHILADELPHIA EAGLES
STATS/ROSTER/LINEUPS

NUMERICAL ROSTER

4	JAKE **ELLIOTT**	K
7	NATE **SUDFELD**	QB
8	DONNIE **JONES**	P
9	NICK **FOLES**	QB
10	MACK **HOLLINS**	WR
13	NELSON **AGHOLOR**	WR
14	MARCUS **JOHNSON**	WR
17	ALSHON **JEFFERY**	WR
18	SHELTON **GIBSON**	WR
21	PATRICK **ROBINSON**	CB
22	SIDNEY **JONES**	CB
23	RODNEY **McLEOD**	S
24	COREY **GRAHAM**	S
26	JAYLEN **WATKINS**	S
27	MALCOLM **JENKINS**	S
28	WENDELL **SMALLWOOD**	RB
29	LeGARRETTE **BLOUNT**	RB
30	COREY **CLEMENT**	RB
31	JALEN **MILLS**	CB
32	RASUL **DOUGLAS**	CB
36	JAY **AJAYI**	RB
38	KENJON **BARNER**	RB
41	RONALD **DARBY**	CB
45	RICK **LOVATO**	LS
47	NATHAN **GERRY**	LB
50	BRYAN **BRAMAN**	DE
51	STEVEN **MEANS**	DE
52	NAJEE **GOODE**	LB
53	NIGEL **BRADHAM**	LB
54	KAMU **GRUGIER-HILL**	LB
55	BRANDON **GRAHAM**	DE
56	CHRIS **LONG**	DE
57	DANNELL **ELLERBE**	LB
61	STEFEN **WISNIEWSKI**	C/G
62	JASON **KELCE**	C
65	LANE **JOHNSON**	T
66	WILL **BEATTY**	T
67	CHANCE **WARMACK**	G
72	HALAPOULIVAATI **VAITAI**	T
73	ISAAC **SEUMALO**	G
75	VINNY **CURRY**	DE
79	BRANDON **BROOKS**	G
82	TORREY **SMITH**	WR
86	ZACH **ERTZ**	TE
87	BRENT **CELEK**	TE
88	TREY **BURTON**	TE
91	FLETCHER **COX**	DT
93	TIM **JERNIGAN**	DT
94	BEAU **ALLEN**	DT
95	MYCHAL **KENDRICKS**	LB
96	DEREK **BARNETT**	DE
97	DESTINY **VAEAO**	DT
98	ELIJAH **QUALLS**	DT

STATISTICAL LEADERS

PASSING	COMP-ATT	PCT	YDS	TD	INT	RTNG
CARSON **WENTZ**	265-440	60.2	3296	33	7	101.9
NICK **FOLES**	57-101	56.4	537	5	2	79.5

RUSHING	ATT	YDS	AVG	LONG	TD
LeGARRETTE **BLOUNT**	173	766	4.4	68	2
JAY **AJAYI**	70	408	5.8	71	1

RECEIVING	NO	YDS	AVG	LONG	TD
ZACH **ERTZ**	74	824	11.1	53	8
NELSON **AGHOLOR**	62	768	12.4	72	8
ALSHON **JEFFERY**	57	789	13.8	53	9
TORREY **SMITH**	36	430	11.9	59	2
TREY **BURTON**	23	248	10.8	27	5

DEFENSE	TACKLES	ASSISTS	TOTAL	SACKS	PD	FF
MALCOLM **JENKINS**	83	36	119	1	12	1
JALEN **MILLS**	68	18	86	0	22	0
NIGEL **BRADHAM**	67	18	85	1	8	1
RODNEY **McLEOD**	52	26	78	0	11	1
MYCHAL **KENDRICKS**	56	16	72	2	6	0
PATRICK **ROBINSON**	46	8	54	1	22	0
BRANDON **GRAHAM**	43	8	51	9.5	1	2

INTERCEPTIONS	NO	YDS	AVG	LONG	TD
PATRICK **ROBINSON**	4	36	9.0	19	0
RODNEY **McLEOD**	3	67	22.3	50	0
JALEN **MILLS**	3	53	17.7	37	1
RONALD **DARBY**	3	42	14.0	37	0

KICK RETURNS	RET	YDS	AVG	LONG	TD
KENJON **BARNER**	10	194	19.4	27	0

PUNT RETURNS	RET	FC	AVG	LONG	TD
KENJON **BARNER**	27	15	8.9	76	0

PUNTING	NO	AVG	NET	TCHBK	IN/20	LONG
DONNIE **JONES**	67	45.3	40.6	5	21	62

FIELD GOALS	TOTAL	1-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+
JAKE **ELLIOTT**	26-31	0-0	5-5	4-7	12-13	5-6

OFFENSIVE DEPTH CHART

WR	17	**ALSHON JEFFERY**
	14	MARCUS JOHNSON
LT	72	**HALAPOULIVAATI VAITAI**
	73	ISAAC SEUMALO
LG	61	**STEFEN WISNIEWSKI**
	67	CHANCE WARMACK
C	62	**JASON KELCE**
	61	STEFEN WISNIEWSKI
RG	79	**BRANDON BROOKS**
	73	ISAAC SEUMALO
RT	65	**LANE JOHNSON**
	66	WILL BEATTY
TE	86	**ZACH ERTZ**
	87	BRENT CELEK
WR	13	**NELSON AGHOLOR**
	10	MACK HOLLINS
WR	82	**TORREY SMITH**
	10	MACK HOLLINS
QB	9	**NICK FOLES**
	7	NATE SUDFELD
RB	29	**LeGARRETTE BLOUNT**
	36	JAY AJAYI

DEFENSIVE DEPTH CHART

DE	75	**VINNY CURRY**
	96	DEREK BARNETT
DT	93	**TIM JERNIGAN**
	94	BEAU ALLEN
DT	91	**FLETCHER COX**
	97	DESTINY VAEAO
DE	55	**BRANDON GRAHAM**
	56	CHRIS LONG
OLB	95	**MYCHAL KENDRICKS**
	54	KAMU GRUGIER-HILL
MLB	57	**DANNELL ELLERBE**
	52	NAJEE GOODE
OLB	53	**NIGEL BRADHAM**
	47	NATHAN GERRY
CB	31	**JALEN MILLS**
	21	PATRICK ROBINSON
CB	41	**RONALD DARBY**
	32	RASUL DOUGLAS
S	23	**RODNEY McLEOD**
	24	COREY GRAHAM
S	27	**MALCOLM JENKINS**
	26	JAYLEN WATKINS

SPECIALISTS DEPTH CHART

K	4	**JAKE ELLIOTT**
P	8	**DONNIE JONES**
H	8	**DONNIE JONES**
LS	45	**RICK LOVATO**
KR	38	**KENJON BARNER**
	30	COREY CLEMENT
PR	38	**KENJON BARNER**
	82	TORREY SMITH

EAGLES FLYING HIGH INTO BIG GAME

BY CRAIG ELLENPORT

When Carson Wentz was lost for the season with a knee injury in Week 14, Philadelphia Eagles fans were understandably apoplectic. No way, they thought, could a backup quarterback bring this franchise its first-ever Super Bowl championship. Think again.

The stories of QBs coming off the bench to lead their teams to the Lombardi Trophy are more plentiful than one may realize (see "Seconds Can Be Best" on page 66), including one penned 16 years ago by the guy across the field on Super Bowl Sunday: Tom Brady.

Nick Foles may not be Brady, but at least he has a chance in Super Bowl LII to mirror the Patriots QB's 2001 accomplishment – when he went from unknown backup at the start of the season to Super Bowl hero when it ended.

Wentz was a leading MVP candidate before getting hurt, ironically in a game that saw him throw four touchdown passes against the L.A. Rams – the last of those on essentially one leg – to give the Eagles the inside track to the NFC's top seed. Those four touchdowns also gave Wentz 33 TD passes for the season, breaking a team record that had long been held by Hall of Famer Sonny Jurgensen. Even at year's end, Wentz's TD total ranked second in the league.

Was all hope lost? Obviously not, as the Eagles won two of their final three regular-season games with Foles behind center to tie a franchise mark of 13 wins. Still, despite being the conference's No. 1 seed, Philly was given little chance to make it to Minnesota.

In retrospect, that lack of respect may have been the final piece of the Eagles' Super Bowl puzzle. After rolling through the regular season, they were suddenly underdogs. They gladly embraced that role like another heavy underdog from Philadelphia: Rocky Balboa.

QB Nick Foles has taken control of the Eagles' offense and quickly developed a connection with the team's talented group of playmakers.

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Al Tielemans/AP Images

Al Tielemans/AP Images

Zach Ertz (left) and Brandon Brooks are keys to the Eagles' offensive success. Ertz's eight TD catches ranked second among NFL tight ends, while Brooks is among the league's top guards.

2017 EAGLES RESULTS (15-3)

Date	Opponent	Score	W/L
9/10	Washington	30-17	W
9/17	Kansas City	20-27	L
9/24	N.Y. GIANTS	27-24	W
10/1	L.A. Chargers	26-24	W
10/8	ARIZONA	34-7	W
10/12	Carolina	28-23	W
10/23	WASHINGTON	34-24	W
10/29	SAN FRANCISCO	33-10	W
11/5	DENVER	51-23	W
11/19	Dallas	37-9	W
11/26	CHICAGO	31-3	W
12/3	Seattle	10-24	L
12/10	L.A. Rams	43-35	W
12/17	N.Y. Giants	34-29	W
12/25	OAKLAND	19-10	W
12/31	DALLAS	0-6	L

NFC Playoffs

1/13	ATLANTA	15-10	W
1/21	MINNESOTA	38-7	W

"People discount us, don't give us much credit," said second-year head coach Doug Pederson, who deserves a good dose of the credit for keeping his team upbeat and focused. Pederson has been a big supporter of Foles since the backup stepped in. Part of that might be the coach's confidence as an offensive play-caller. And part of it might be that he knows his team – regardless of who's taking the snaps – has all the traits of a champion: veteran leadership, strong defense, and a reliable run game.

"This is a total football team," said Tony Dungy, himself a Super Bowl-winning coach. "They have a great defense. They play with a lot of energy. They run the ball well. They don't have to rely on the quarterback to carry them."

So forget about becoming the first team since 2001 to win the Super Bowl with a backup quarterback. If they can win one more game, the Eagles will bring Philadelphia its first NFL championship since 1960.

OFFENSE

The Eagles finished 2017 tied for second in the NFL in scoring, averaging 28.6 points per game. Wentz had a lot to do with that, of course, but Foles has those same weapons at his disposal. In fact, just one week after Wentz threw four TD passes in the last game of his season, Foles threw four touchdown passes of his own, in a 34-29 victory over the New York Giants. Not surprisingly, three of the players who caught TDs in that game were receivers Nelson Agholor and Alshon Jeffery, and tight end Zach Ertz – the only trio of teammates in the league this season with at least eight touchdown receptions each.

Jeffery, a free-agent pickup from the Bears, led the team with nine scoring grabs, tied for fourth in the NFL. His big-play ability draws enough attention from opposing defenses to allow slot receiver Agholor to work effectively underneath, so it's no surprise Agholor produced career highs in receptions (62), yards (768), and TDs (8). Ertz, meanwhile, earned his first Pro Bowl nod after totaling a team-best 74 catches with eight scores, the latter number tied for second among NFL tight ends.

As for Foles, he's not your average backup. He went to the Pro Bowl in 2013, when he started for the Eagles and threw 27 touchdowns against just two interceptions for a team that won the NFC East title. That's among the many reasons he was brought back to Philadelphia after a year with the Rams and another in Kansas City. Foles also has a connection with Pederson, who was the Eagles' quarterbacks coach when the team drafted him in 2012.

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* Source: Euromonitor International Limited; in terms of retail sales value in 2016, based on the custom research conducted in March-April 2017 in the countries that account for more than 70% share of the global topical analgesics/anesthetic market in 2016

With Malcolm Jenkins (left) and Vinny Curry on the field, the Eagles are strong at both ends of the defense. Jenkins, a safety, had 119 tackles, while defensive end Curry is a solid run-stopper.

SECONDS CAN BE BEST

Carson Wentz looks on as Nick Foles warms up for the Eagles.

A VICTORY OVER New England would make the Eagles the first team to win a Super Bowl with their backup QB since the 2001 Patriots with Tom Brady. However, a more apt comparison may be the 1990 New York Giants.

Just as Nick Foles took over for a highly accomplished Carson Wentz late this season, the '90 Giants had to adjust after Phil Simms, the NFC's top-rated passer, broke his foot in Week 15. It was considered a huge loss, but Jeff Hostetler stepped in and continued the team's championship push, which ended with a Super Bowl XXV win over the Buffalo Bills. It turns out Hostetler was the perfect complement to the Giants' dominant defense and strong run game. Sound familiar?

Other backup quarterbacks who've similarly led their teams to Super Bowl wins include Doug Williams, who replaced an injured Jay Schroeder for the 1987 Washington Redskins and starred in their Super Bowl XXII victory. In 1999, Kurt Warner became the Rams' QB before the season even began, taking over when projected starter Trent Green went down with a knee injury. The rest is history for that team; the high-scoring Rams won Super Bowl XXXIV. One year later, Trent Dilfer was the Ravens' mid-season replacement for a struggling Tony Banks, and was behind center when they captured Super Bowl XXXV.

For all the attention showered on the team's success through the air, it's the Eagles running game that has kept opposing defenses honest this season. They quietly had the NFL's third-ranked rushing offense, averaging 132.2 yards per game – and they did it with a pair of running backs who weren't on the roster a year ago.

Big-back LeGarrette Blount was signed as a free agent from the Patriots in the offseason and carried the load in the first half of 2017. Blount, who rushed for a team-leading 766 yards, stepped in as the first- and second-down guy, backed by Darren Sproles. When Sproles was injured in Week 3, Corey Clement, who scored six touchdowns on the year, assumed that change-of-pace role.

The Eagles further beefed up their backfield when they acquired Jay Ajayi from the Dolphins at the trade deadline. In his Week 9 debut, Ajayi rushed for 77 yards on just eight carries, including a 46-yard score. He's seeing fewer carries than in his days in Miami – a result of Pederson's philosophy to spread the ball around – but his 408 rushing yards and 5.8 yards per carry as an Eagle show that he has the ability to make big plays.

None of this offensive versatility would be

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possible without a lot of talent up front, and the Eagles boast an offensive line that includes two Pro Bowlers: right guard Brandon Brooks and right tackle Lane Johnson. There also are solid veterans at center (Jason Kelce) and left guard (Stefen Wisniewski), and left tackle Halapoulivaati Vaitai has more than held his own since nine-time Pro Bowl selection Jason Peters was injured in Week 7.

DEFENSE

Defensive coordinator Jim Schwartz, who was the Detroit Lions' head coach from 2009-13, is again a hot name for coaching vacancies. His résumé looks even better after what the Eagles have done on defense under his tutelage.

Philly ranked first in the league in rushing defense (79.2 yards per game), and were fourth in both total defense (306.5 yards per game) and scoring defense (18.4 ppg). Eight times this season – including both playoff games – they've held an opponent to 10 points or fewer.

An aggressive four-man front sets the tone, led by Pro Bowl defensive tackle Fletcher Cox and end Brandon Graham, who had a team-high 9.5 sacks coming off the edge. Rookie defensive end Derek Barnett added five sacks, and veteran Chris Long, another pickup from the Patriots, has made one big play after another.

With the line causing its share of disruption, linebacker Nigel Bradham has been able to step up and finish plays. Bradham, who came in for injured starter Jordan Hicks, made 85 tackles and has eliminated concerns about any weakness at that position.

While the secondary will surrender a few big plays, it is another team strength. Cornerback Jalen Mills is fast and physical, capable of going one-on-one with any No. 1 receiver. Veteran Pro Bowl safety Malcolm Jenkins (119 tackles, two interceptions) has been a leader on the field and in the locker room and, notably, has four pick-sixes in the last five years. Cornerback Patrick Robinson (team-high four interceptions) had one of his own in the NFC title game, and that turned out to be a game-changer. The return of corner Ronald Darby from an ankle injury in the season opener has further stabilized the unit.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Less than two weeks after 23-year-old Jake Elliott was signed off the Cincinnati Bengals' practice squad, he kicked a 61-yard field goal

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES ALL-TIME PLAYOFF RESULTS

(21 WINS, 21 LOSSES)

Year	Playoffs	Location	Final	W/L
1947	NFL Divisional	at Pittsburgh	21-0	W
	NFL Championship	at Chicago Cardinals	21-28	L
1948	NFL Championship	Chicago Cardinals	7-0	W
1949	NFL Championship	at L.A. Rams	14-0	W
1960	NFL Championship	Green Bay	17-13	W
1978	NFC Wild Card	at Atlanta	13-14	L
1979	NFC Wild Card	Chicago	27-17	W
	NFC Divisional	at Tampa Bay	17-24	L
1980	NFC Divisional	Minnesota	31-16	W
	NFC Championship	Dallas	20-7	W
	Super Bowl XV	**Oakland**	**10-27**	**L**
1981	NFC Wild Card	N.Y. Giants	21-27	L
1988	NFC Divisional	at Chicago	12-20	L
1989	NFC Wild Card	L.A. Rams	7-21	L
1990	NFC Wild Card	Washington	6-20	L
1992	NFC Wild Card	at New Orleans	36-20	W
	NFC Divisional	at Dallas	10-34	L
1995	NFC Wild Card	Detroit	58-37	W
	NFC Divisional	at Dallas	11-30	L
1996	NFC Wild Card	at San Francisco	0-14	L
2000	NFC Wild Card	Tampa Bay	21-3	W
	NFC Divisional	at N.Y. Giants	10-20	L
2001	NFC Wild Card	Tampa Bay	31-9	W
	NFC Divisional	at Chicago	33-19	W
	NFC Championship	at St. Louis	24-29	L
2002	NFC Divisional	Atlanta	20-6	W
	NFC Championship	Tampa Bay	10-27	L
2003	NFC Divisional	Green Bay	20-17 (OT)	W
	NFC Championship	Carolina	3-14	L
2004	NFC Divisional	Minnesota	27-14	W
	NFC Championship	Atlanta	27-10	W
	Super Bowl XXXIX	**New England**	**21-24**	**L**
2006	NFC Wild Card	N.Y. Giants	23-20	W
	NFC Divisional	at New Orleans	24-27	L
2008	NFC Wild Card	at Minnesota	26-14	W
	NFC Divisional	at N.Y. Giants	23-11	W
	NFC Championship	at Arizona	25-32	L
2009	NFC Wild Card	at Dallas	14-34	L
2010	NFC Wild Card	Green Bay	16-21	L
2013	NFC Wild Card	New Orleans	24-26	L
2017	NFC Divisional	Atlanta	15-10	W
	NFC Championship	Minnesota	38-7	W

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as time expired to beat the Giants. He hasn't looked back since. Overall, Elliott made 26 of 31 field goal attempts during the regular season, including a team-record five from 50 yards or more. He also was a hero in the 15-10 Divisional-round victory over Atlanta, kicking three field goals, among them a 53-yarder into the wind at the end of the first half.

The Eagles have a veteran punter in Donnie Jones (45.3 average), and the team's special teams units show the same tenacity as its defense. Case in point: In Week 15 against the Giants, the Eagles blocked a punt, a field goal, and a PAT attempt – the first time that's happened in an NFL game since 1991.

GAME PLAN

With the way they've handled adversity, the Eagles have already proven they belong on the Super Bowl stage. Their balanced offense and stingy defense helped them rack up 13 wins, the NFC's top seed, and the league's best scoring differential (plus-162, tied with the Patriots).

Pederson revealed before the playoffs began that he was looking at some offensive wrinkles that might better suit Foles. As the second half of the Falcons game and the entire Vikings game showed, that extra time spent with his QB has paid off. In particular, Foles looks extremely comfortable on the run-pass option, a byproduct of his first go-round in Philadelphia. And, no doubt, they've added a few more elements to the offense since the NFC title game.

Still, Pederson knows what brought his team here. If Blount and Ajayi can run the ball well, that takes pressure off Foles and will keep the Patriots' defense guessing. For a team that doesn't want to get into a shootout, even after scoring 38 points against Minnesota, that will be vitally important.

Defensively, Schwartz's group will continue to do what they do best: be aggressive, stuff the run, and create as much pressure as needed to force mistakes. It's the formula that helped Philadelphia compile an NFC-best plus-11 turnover margin.

If the Eagles can follow that game plan, they won't just survive this title fight, a la Rocky in his first bout with Apollo Creed. This time, Philadelphia's favorite sons will walk away as champions.

Craig Ellenport is a freelance writer who has covered the NFL for 25 years.

CHAMPIONSHIP

NFC CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

PHILADELPHIA 38
Minnesota 7

THE EAGLES DONNED THE UNDERDOG MASK ONCE AGAIN, and by the time they took it off, they were NFC champions.

With a dominant 38-7 victory over the visiting Vikings, Philadelphia earned its third Super Bowl berth in history and set up a rematch of Super Bowl XXXIX against the Patriots.

Minnesota seized the early momentum when QB Case Keenum led a near-perfect drive to start the game, taking his team 75 yards in nine plays, covering the last of those with a 25-yard TD toss to a wide-open Kyle Rudolph. It turned out to be the Vikings' only highlight of the game.

Just four minutes after that score, the Eagles' defense made the play that reversed the game's course. Pressure from defensive end Chris Long forced an errant Keenum throw that cornerback Patrick Robinson picked off and returned 50 yards – weaving from one side of the field to the other – for the touchdown that launched the home team.

Philadelphia would erupt for 17 more points before the first half ended. It began with QB Nick Foles directing a 12-play drive, capped with LeGarrette Blount bullying his way into the end zone from 11 yards out. Minnesota was then on the move, but on a third-and-5 from the Philly 16, Derek Barnett strip-sacked Keenum and Long fell on the loose ball. Foles took full advantage, quickly hitting Jeffery for a 53-yard touchdown to make it 21-7. The Vikings then gave the ball right back, and a 33-yard Foles-to-Zach Ertz pass set up Jake Elliott's 38-yard field goal as the second quarter ended.

If any doubt remained about the game's outcome, it was soon erased. Philadelphia scored on its first possession of the second half when Torrey Smith made an acrobatic catch off a flea-flicker and fell into the end zone for a 41-yard TD. The Vikings valiantly tried to answer and got as close as the Eagles 7-yard line before four straight incomplete passes ended the threat and any hopes for a comeback.

Foles had a stellar game on the biggest stage of his career, finishing 26 of 33 passing for 352 yards and three touchdowns. Ertz caught eight passes, and Jeffery and Smith had five receptions each. Jay Ajayi added a game-high 73 yards rushing for the victors.

LINCOLN FINANCIAL FIELD
Philadelphia, Pa. Jan. 21, 2018

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Minnesota	7	0	0	0	7
Philadelphia	7	17	7	7	38

1st Quarter
MIN Rudolph 25 pass from Keenum (Forbath kick), 4:46
PHI Robinson 50 interception return (Elliott kick), 8:34

2nd Quarter
PHI Blount 11 run (Elliott kick), 2:23
PHI Jeffery 53 pass from Foles (Elliott kick), 13:51
PHI Elliott 38 FG, 15:00

3rd Quarter
PHI Smith 41 pass from Foles (Elliott kick), 4:55

4th Quarter
PHI Jeffery 5 pass from Foles (Elliott kick), 0:50

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JEFFREY LURIE Chairman and CEO

JEFFREY LURIE purchased the Philadelphia Eagles in 1994, launching the most successful run in the franchise's history.

During his time as Chairman and CEO, the Eagles have become a perennial contender, establishing a winning tradition by capturing eight NFC East titles, playing in six conference championship games (tied for the second-most in the NFL since 2001, trailing only New England's 12), and making appearances in Super Bowls XXXIX and LII. This unprecedented run of success has led to a greater overall winning percentage, more playoff games (25), and more playoff victories (13) than the Eagles had under all previous ownership groups combined.

While Lurie's teams have thrived on the field, he also has built a successful business and community-oriented organization. After purchasing the Eagles, Lurie undertook a total reconstruction, design, and relocation of the team's office headquarters, practice facility, and stadium. He committed to providing the franchise everything it needed to succeed, and constructed two state-of-the-art facilities in South Philadelphia: the NovaCare Complex and Lincoln Financial Field.

Although Lincoln Financial Field was erected specifically to house its primary tenant – the Eagles – Lurie created a multidimensional event destination that could host a variety of events.

Lincoln Financial Field has evolved over the years with an ever-changing entertainment landscape. In 2013, it underwent a two-year, $125 million revitalization. The venue has welcomed high-profile events that include sold-out concerts, national and international soccer matches, the NCAA Lacrosse Championships, the Army-Navy Game, Monster Jam, Temple University football games, and more.

Lurie serves on numerous NFL committees, including the Finance Committee, Broadcast Committee, International Committee, and the Super Bowl Advisory Committee.

Lurie also is a thoughtful and compassionate philanthropist. One of his earliest philanthropic endeavors was the creation of the team's non-profit charity. Now known as the Eagles Charitable Foundation, this organization provides children in the Philadelphia region with greater access to vision care and supports autism research and services.

In 2017, Lurie launched Eagles Autism Challenge to raise money to address the complex medical and scientific issues associated with the condition of autism. Inspired by his younger brother, who is autistic, Lurie and his family are devoted to raising money and awareness for research on the causes of the neurodevelopmental disorder.

The Challenge is a landmark biking and 5K run/walk event that directs 100 percent of participant-raised funds to autism research and programs at three nationally recognized institutions – Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Drexel University, and Thomas Jefferson University and Jefferson Health.

Jeffrey Lurie has been a vital part of the Philadelphia community during his time as Eagles owner.

Lurie earned a B.A. from Clark University, a master's in psychology from Boston University, and a Ph.D. in social policy from Brandeis University. He served as an executive producer of "Inocente," which earned an Academy Award for Best Short Documentary in 2013, and the 2010 documentary "Inside Job," which earned the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature.

Lurie has two children and resides in the Philadelphia area with his wife, Tina.

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES TEAM OFFICIALS

EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATION

JEFFREY LURIE
Chairman and CEO

DON SMOLENSKI
President

CHRISTINA WEISS LURIE
President Eagles Charitable Foundation, Eagles Social Responsibility

AILEEN DAGROSA
Senior Vice President, General Counsel

ANNE GORDON
Senior Vice President of Marketing, Media & Communications

FRANK GUMIENNY
Senior Vice President, Chief Financial Officer

JASON MILLER
Senior Vice President of Operations

ARI ROITMAN
Senior Vice President of Business

FOOTBALL OPERATIONS

HOWIE ROSEMAN
Executive Vice President of Football Operations

DOM DiSANDRO
Vice President of Team Security

ALEC HALABY
Vice President of Football Operations and Strategy

GREG DELIMITROS
Director of Equipment Operations

PATRICK DOLAN
Director of Football Technology

JON FERRARI
Director of Football Compliance

PAUL LANCASTER
Director of Player Engagement

JAKE ROSENBERG
Director of Football Administration

BRIAN DAWKINS
Executive/Football Operations

KEVIN DOUGHERTY
Video Director

SCOUTING

JOE DOUGLAS
Vice President of Player Personnel

TOM DONAHOE
Senior Football Advisor

ANDY WEIDL
Assistant Director of Player Personnel

ANTHONY PATCH
Senior Director of College Scouting

IAN CUNNINGHAM
Director of College Scouting

DWAYNE JOSEPH
Director of Pro Scouting

TJ McCREIGHT
Player Personnel Executive

TREY BROWN
Player Personnel Executive – College/Pro

TRAINING STAFF/ SPORTS SCIENCE TEAM

CHRIS PEDUZZI
Director of Sports Medicine/ Head Athletic Trainer

SHAUN HULS
Director of High Performance

JAMES HANISCH
Director of Performance Science

JOSH HINGST
Head Strength Coach

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DOUG PEDERSON Coach

DOUG PEDERSON was named the Philadelphia Eagles' head coach on Jan. 18, 2016, after spending three years as the offensive coordinator of the Kansas City Chiefs (2013-15). Pederson owns a 22-12 (.647) mark in his two seasons with the Eagles (including playoffs), highlighted by an NFC Championship and franchise-record-tying 13-3 (.813) regular-season campaign in 2017.

In his second season at the helm, Pederson oversaw an Eagles offense that led the NFL in red zone efficiency (65.5%) and time of possession (32:41), ranked second in offensive touchdowns (47), and was third in total points (457, second-most in franchise history) and rushing yards (2,115). Six Eagles earned Pro Bowl invitations in 2017: guard Brandon Brooks, defensive tackle Fletcher Cox, tight end Zach Ertz, safety Malcolm Jenkins, tackle Lane Johnson, and quarterback Carson Wentz.

Prior to coaching with the Chiefs, Pederson served as an assistant under head coach Andy Reid with the Eagles – as offensive quality control coordinator (2009-10) and quarterbacks coach (2011-12).

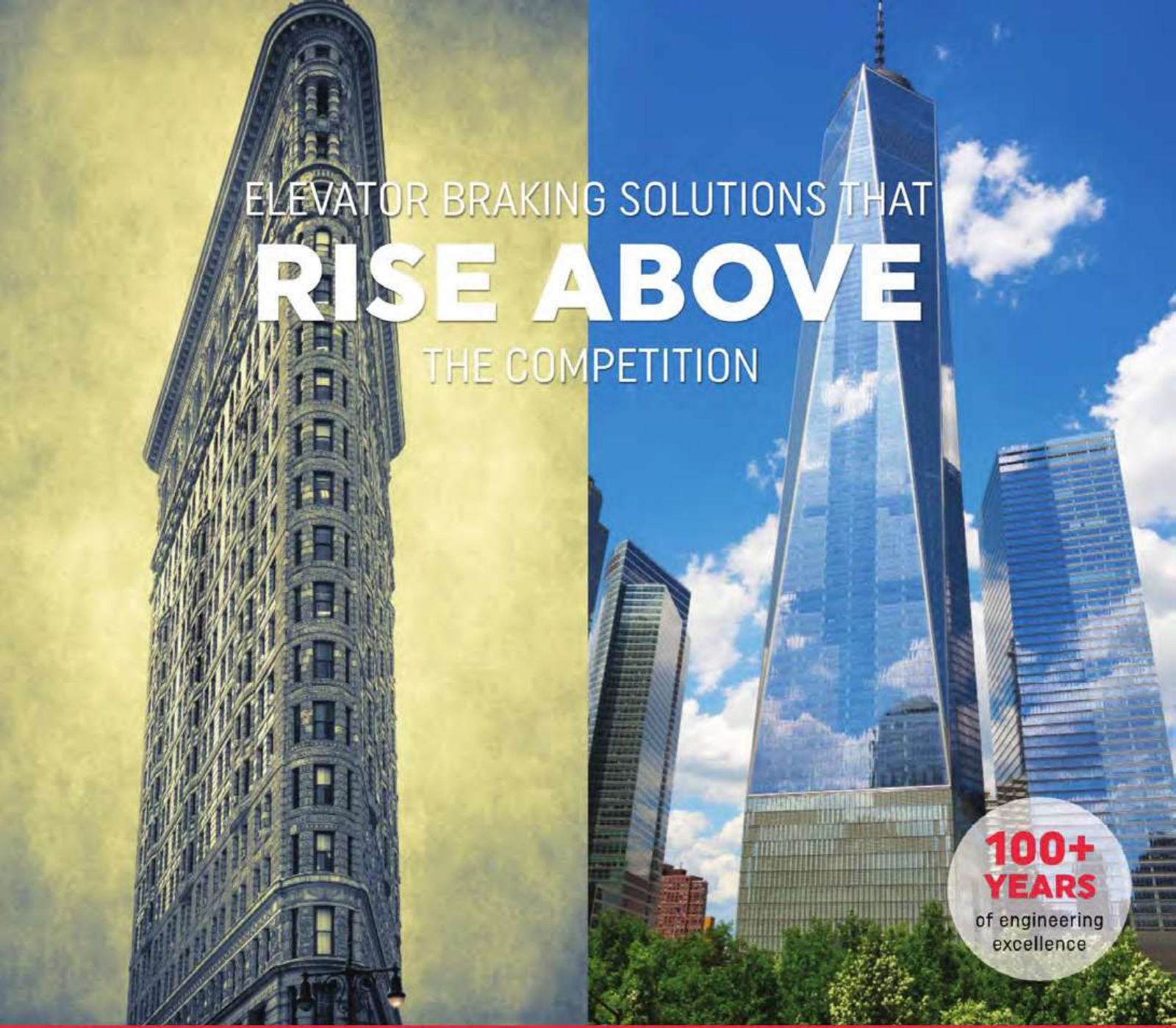
Born Jan. 31, 1968, in Bellingham, Wash., Pederson is a 1991 graduate of Northeast Louisiana who went on to a 14-year career as a pro quarterback. He spent eight seasons with the Packers (1995-98, 2001-04) – and was part of their Super Bowl XXXI-winning team – and played for the Eagles in 1999, starting nine games.

ASSISTANT COACHES

EUGENE CHUNG.....Asst. Off. Line/Tight Ends/Run Game Coach
PHILLIP DANIELS.....Def. Quality Control/Asst. Def. Line Coach
JOHN DeFILIPPO.....Quarterbacks Coach
DAVE FIPP.....Special Teams Coordinator
KEN FLAJOLE.....Linebackers Coach
KEITH GRAY.....Assistant Strength & Conditioning Coach
MIKE GROH.....Wide Receivers Coach
MATTHEW HARPER.....Assistant Special Teams Coach
TIM HAUCK.....Safeties Coach
JOSH HINGST.....Strength & Conditioning Coach
TRENT MILES.....Coaching Assistant
RYAN PAGANETTI.....Coaching Assistant/Linebackers
TJ PAGANETTI.....Off. Quality Control/Asst. Off. Line Coach
JUSTIN PEELLE.....Tight Ends Coach
SPENCER PHILLIPS.....Coaching Assistant
FRANK REICH.....Offensive Coordinator
JIM SCHWARTZ.....Defensive Coordinator
DUCE STALEY.....Running Backs Coach
JEFF STOUTLAND.....Offensive Line Coach
PRESS TAYLOR.....Off. Quality Control/Asst. Quarterbacks Coach
CORY UNDLIN.....Defensive Backs Coach
DINO VASSO.....Def. Quality Control/Asst. Secondary Coach
CHRIS WILSON.....Defensive Line Coach

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES ALPHABETICAL ROSTER

NO	PLAYER	POS	HT	WT	BIRTH DATE	NFL EXP	COLLEGE	HOW ACQUIRED
13	**Agholor**, Nelson	WR	6-0	198	5/24/93	3	USC	D1 '15
36	**Ajayi**, Jay	RB	6-0	223	6/15/93	3	Boise State	T (MIA) '17
94	**Allen**, Beau	DT	6-3	327	11/14/91	4	Wisconsin	D7 '14
38	**Barner**, Kenjon	RB	5-9	195	4/28/90	4	Oregon	FA '17
96	**Barnett**, Derek	DE	6-3	259	6/25/96	R	Tennessee	D1 '17
66	**Beatty**, Will	T	6-6	319	3/2/85	9	Connecticut	FA '17
29	**Blount**, LeGarrette	RB	6-0	250	12/5/86	8	Oregon	FA (NE) '17
53	**Bradham**, Nigel	LB	6-2	241	9/4/89	6	Florida State	FA (BUF) '16
50	**Braman**, Bryan	DE	6-5	241	5/4/87	7	West Texas A&M	FA '17
79	**Brooks**, Brandon	G	6-5	335	8/19/89	6	Miami (Ohio)	FA (HOU) '16
88	**Burton**, Trey	TE	6-3	235	10/29/91	4	Florida	UDFA '14
87	**Celek**, Brent	TE	6-4	255	1/25/85	11	Cincinnati	D5b '07
30	**Clement**, Corey	RB	5-10	220	11/2/94	R	Wisconsin	UDFA '17
91	**Cox**, Fletcher	DT	6-4	310	12/13/90	6	Mississippi State	D1 '12
75	**Curry**, Vinny	DE	6-3	279	6/30/88	6	Marshall	D2b '12
41	**Darby**, Ronald	CB	5-11	193	1/2/94	3	Florida State	T (BUF) '17
32	**Douglas**, Rasul	CB	6-2	209	8/29/95	R	West Virginia	D3 '17
57	**Ellerbe**, Dannell	LB	6-1	245	11/29/85	9	Georgia	FA '17
4	**Elliott**, Jake	K	5-9	167	1/21/95	R	Memphis	PS (CIN) '17
86	**Ertz**, Zach	TE	6-5	250	11/10/90	5	Stanford	D2 '13
9	**Foles**, Nick	QB	6-6	243	1/20/89	6	Arizona	FA (KC) '17
47	**Gerry**, Nathan	LB	6-2	218	2/23/95	R	Nebraska	D5b '17
18	**Gibson**, Shelton	WR	5-11	191	3/20/95	R	West Virginia	D5a '17
52	**Goode**, Najee	LB	6-0	244	6/4/89	6	West Virginia	W (TB) '13
55	**Graham**, Brandon	DE	6-2	265	4/3/88	8	Michigan	D1 '10
24	**Graham**, Corey	S	6-0	196	7/25/85	11	New Hampshire	FA '17
54	**Grugier-Hill**, Kamu	LB	6-2	220	5/16/94	2	Eastern Illinois	W (NE) '16
10	**Hollins**, Mack	WR	6-4	221	9/16/93	R	North Carolina	D4a '17
17	**Jeffery**, Alshon	WR	6-3	218	2/14/90	6	South Carolina	FA (CHI) '17
27	**Jenkins**, Malcolm	S	6-0	204	12/20/87	9	Ohio State	FA (NO) '14
93	**Jernigan**, Tim	DT	6-2	295	9/24/92	4	Florida State	T (BAL) '17
65	**Johnson**, Lane	T	6-6	317	5/8/90	5	Oklahoma	D1 '13
14	**Johnson**, Marcus	WR	6-1	204	8/5/94	1	Texas	UDFA '16
8	**Jones**, Donnie	P	6-2	221	7/5/80	14	Louisiana State	FA (HOU) '13
22	**Jones**, Sidney	CB	6-0	181	5/21/96	R	Washington	D2 '17
62	**Kelce**, Jason	C	6-3	295	11/5/87	7	Cincinnati	D6a '11
95	**Kendricks**, Mychal	LB	6-0	240	9/28/90	6	California	D2a '12
56	**Long**, Chris	DE	6-3	270	3/28/85	10	Virginia	FA (NE) '17
45	**Lovato**, Rick	LS	6-2	249	9/9/92	1	Old Dominion	FA '16
23	**McLeod**, Rodney	S	5-10	195	6/23/90	6	Virginia	FA (LAR) '16
51	**Means**, Steven	DE	6-3	263	9/16/90	3	Buffalo	PS (HOU) '15
31	**Mills**, Jalen	CB	6-0	191	4/6/94	2	Louisiana State	D7a '16
98	**Qualls**, Elijah	DT	6-1	321	2/11/95	R	Washington	D6 '17
21	**Robinson**, Patrick	CB	5-11	191	9/7/87	8	Florida State	FA '17
73	**Seumalo**, Isaac	G	6-4	303	10/29/93	2	Oregon State	D3 '16
28	**Smallwood**, Wendell	RB	5-10	208	1/20/94	2	West Virginia	D5a '16
82	**Smith**, Torrey	WR	6-0	205	1/26/89	7	Maryland	FA '17
7	**Sudfeld**, Nate	QB	6-6	227	10/7/93	2	Indiana	FA '17
97	**Vaeao**, Destiny	DT	6-4	299	1/15/94	2	Washington State	UDFA '16
72	**Vaitai**, Halapoulivaati	T	6-6	320	6/16/93	2	TCU	D5b '16
67	**Warmack**, Chance	G	6-2	323	9/14/91	5	Alabama	FA (TEN) '17
26	**Watkins**, Jaylen	S	5-11	194	11/27/91	3	Florida	PS (BUF) '15
61	**Wisniewski**, Stefen	C/G	6-3	305	3/22/89	7	Penn State	FA (JAX) '16



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PHILADELPHIA EAGLES
2017 NFC CHAMPIONS

Nelson Agholor (13)
Wide Receiver

Jay Ajayi (36)
Running Back

Beau Allen (94)
Defensive Tackle

Kenjon Barner (38)
Running Back

Derek Barnett (96)
Defensive End

Will Beatty (66)
Tackle

LeGarrette Blount (29)
Running Back

Nigel Bradham (53)
Linebacker

Bryan Braman (50)
Defensive End

Brandon Brooks (79)
Guard

Trey Burton (88)
Tight End

Brent Celek (87)
Tight End

Corey Clement (30)
Running Back

Fletcher Cox (91)
Defensive Tackle

Vinny Curry (75)
Defensive End

Ronald Darby (41)
Cornerback

Rasul Douglas (32)
Cornerback

Dannell Ellerbe (57)
Linebacker

Jake Elliott (4)
Kicker

Zach Ertz (86)
Tight End

Nick Foles (9)
Quarterback

Nathan Gerry (47)
Linebacker

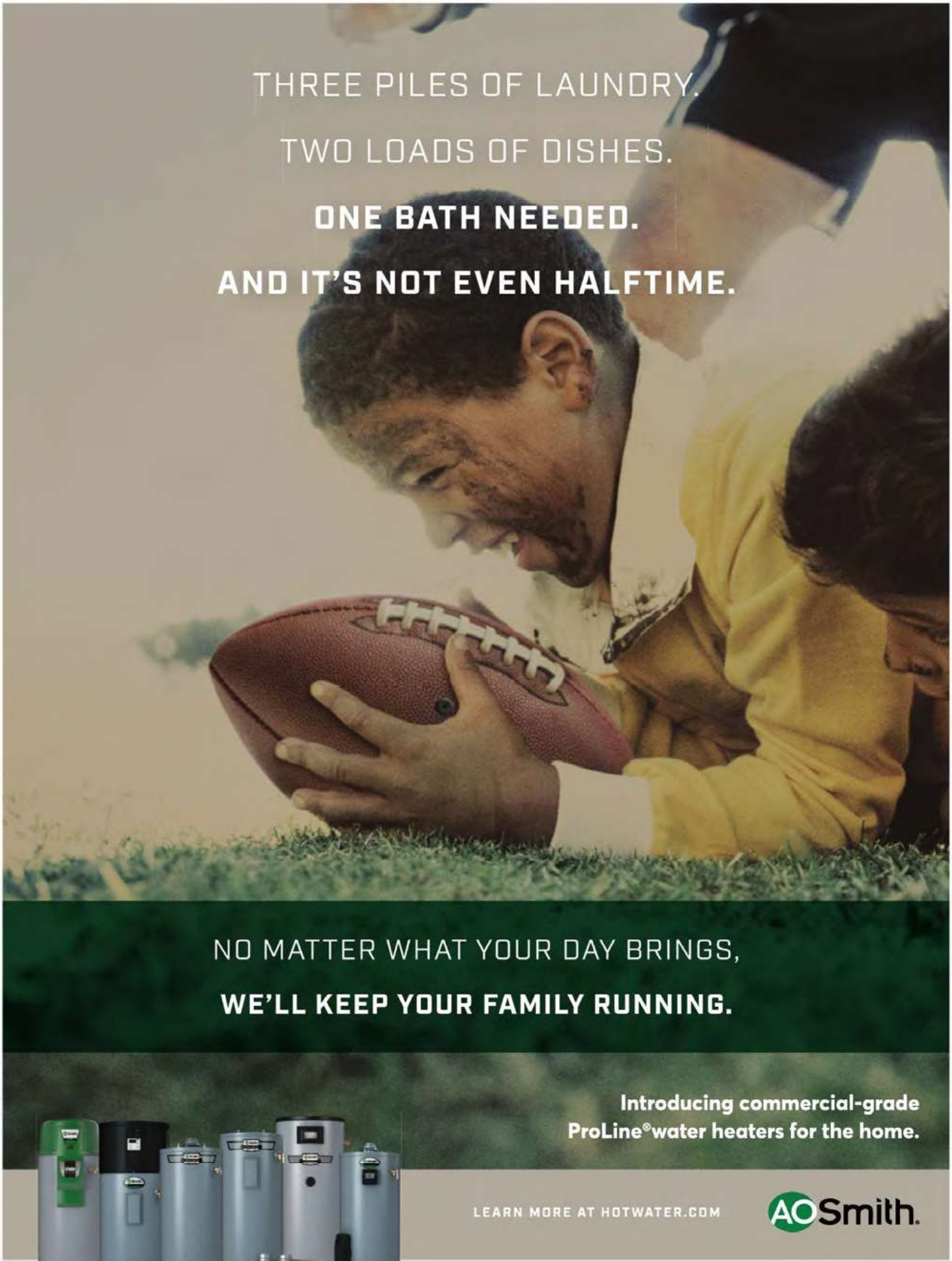
Shelton Gibson (18)
Wide Receiver

Najee Goode (52)
Linebacker

Brandon Graham (55)
Defensive End

Corey Graham (24)
Safety

Kamu Grugier-Hill (54)
Linebacker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Mack Hollins (10)
Wide Receiver

Alshon Jeffery (17)
Wide Receiver

Malcolm Jenkins (27)
Safety

Tim Jernigan (93)
Defensive Tackle

Lane Johnson (65)
Tackle

Marcus Johnson (14)
Wide Receiver

Donnie Jones (8)
Punter

Sidney Jones (22)
Cornerback

Jason Kelce (62)
Center

Mychal Kendricks (95)
Linebacker

Chris Long (56)
Defensive End

Rick Lovato (45)
Long Snapper

Rodney McLeod (23)
Safety

Steven Means (51)
Defensive End

Jalen Mills (31)
Cornerback

Elijah Qualls (98)
Defensive Tackle

Patrick Robinson (21)
Cornerback

Isaac Seumalo (73)
Guard

Wendell Smallwood (28)
Running Back

Torrey Smith (82)
Wide Receiver

Nate Sudfeld (7)
Quarterback

Destiny Vaeao (97)
Defensive Tackle

Halapoulivaati Vaitai (72)
Tackle

Chance Warmack (67)
Guard

Jaylen Watkins (26)
Safety

Stefen Wisniewski (61)
Center/Guard

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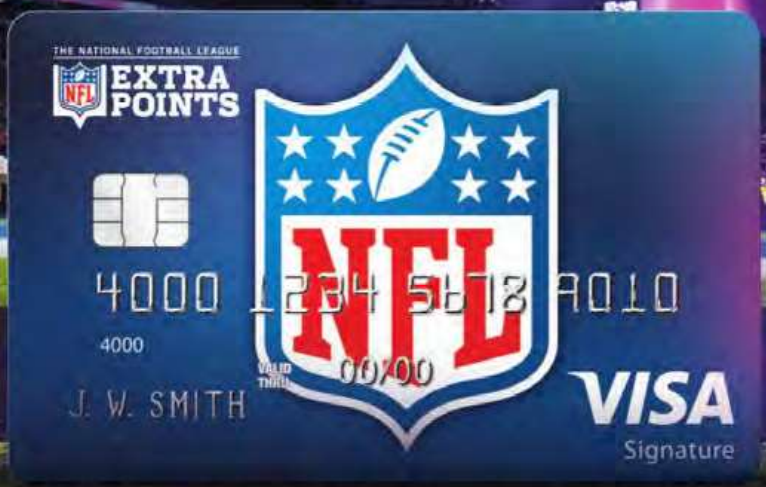

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[1] Redemption Options: Cardmembers may redeem points for a variety of rewards including NFL gift cards, certain NFL based experiences, NFL Tickets, and cash back in the form of a statement credit applied to cardmember's account, beginning at 2,500 points. All rewards selections are subject to availability. Statement credits will appear on the Account within one billing cycle after the Points are redeemed. A statement credit does not constitute a payment and you are required to make your minimum payment due. Statement credit redemptions cannot be changed, are non-refundable and non-transferable.

[2] Offer subject to credit approval. Not everyone will qualify for the World Mastercard or Visa Signature credit card and its benefits. If at the time of your application you do not meet the credit criteria previously established for this offer, or the income you report is insufficient based on your obligations, we may not be able to open an account for you or you may receive a Platinum card. Benefits will vary depending upon the card for which you are approved. Please review the materials provided with the Cardmember Agreement you will receive after account opening for more information about the benefits that will apply. This offer is available to new Cardmembers only. Redemption levels are subject to change. Reward availability is limited and is subject to change. For information about rewards program and benefits, rates, fees, and other costs associated with the use of the credit card program, please visit NFLExtraPoints.com for complete Terms and Conditions.

[3] Bonus Points: Cardmembers will receive ten thousand (10,000) bonus points after at least five hundred dollars ($500) in purchases (that are not later returned or rescinded) are made and post to the account in the first ninety (90) days after account opening. Bonus points will be posted to your account at the close of your billing statement after qualifying purchase(s) have been posted. Balance transfers and cash advances do not qualify for bonus points.

[4] NFLShop.com Discount: Upon account opening, you will receive information with your card that will provide full details on the promo code you need to enter at checkout in order to receive the discount. Discount does not apply to taxes, shipping and handling charges, gift-wrapping or similar charges. Discount not applicable with returned merchandise; total discount will be deducted from the value of any returned item to which the discount applied. Cannot be combined with any other promotional offer nor is this offer valid on previous purchases. Except where required by law, cannot be redeemed for cash, reproduced, modified, sold, traded, refunded or replaced. No cash back. All purchases are subject to this NFLShop.com Terms & Conditions or equivalent. Entire order must be shipped to a single address and customer is responsible for all shipping costs for returned merchandise.

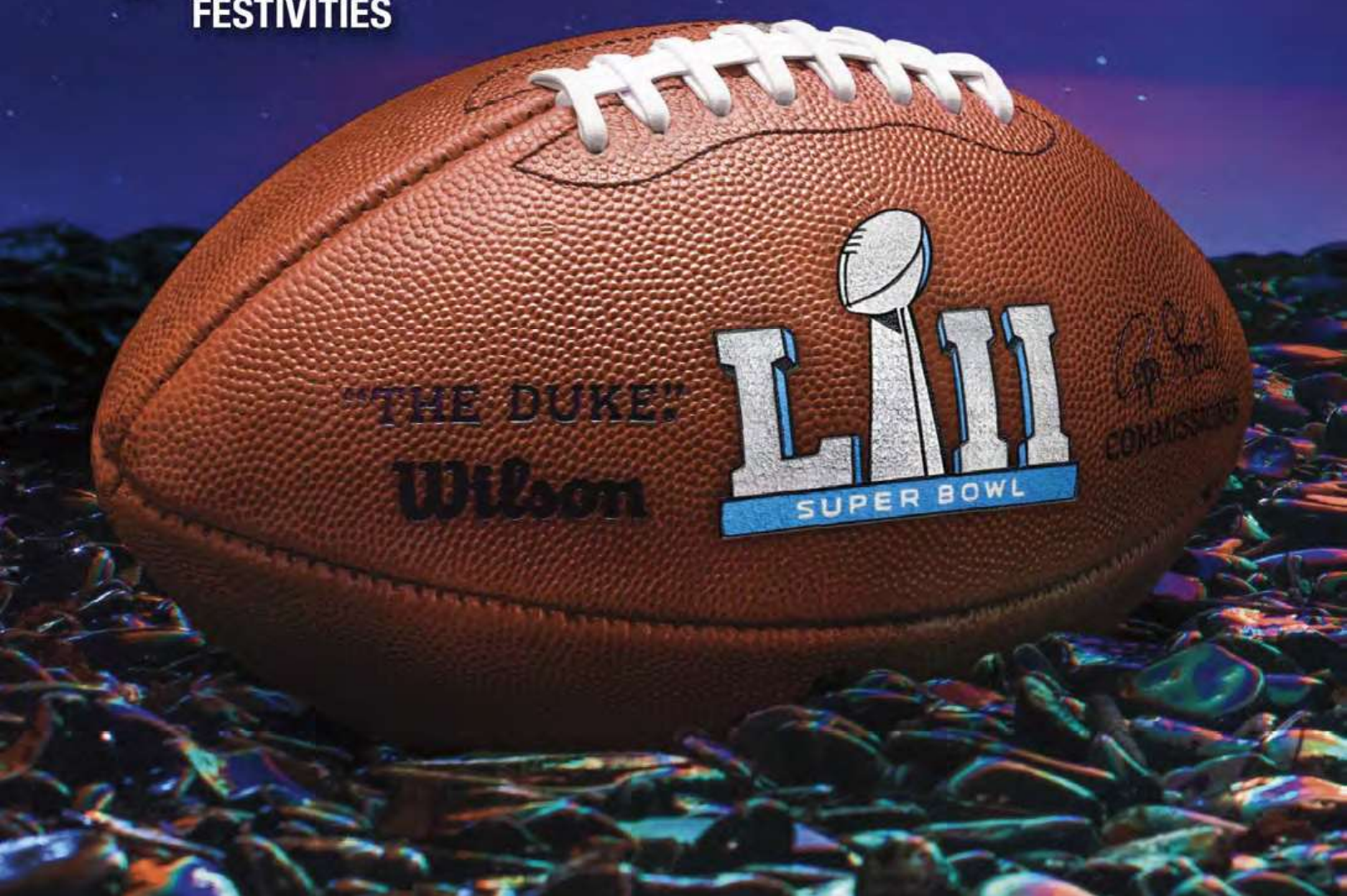
BANKING ON A BIG WEEK

82 HOST COMMITTEE WELCOME

87 SUPER WEEK EVENTS

92 MEDIA COVERAGE

97 GAMEDAY FESTIVITIES



WELCOME
TO MINNESOTA

Dear Super Bowl Guests,

Welcome to Minnesota and our world-class U.S. Bank Stadium, the home of Super Bowl LII!

Our focus at the Minnesota Super Bowl Host Committee has been to create a unique and welcoming Super Bowl experience that offers something for everyone, while showcasing all of the reasons that make Minnesota the best place to live, work, and play.

We are a collection of innovators, artists, scientists, risk takers, explorers, and farmers. From arts and industry to music and medicine, we throw caution to the wind (chill). We are the Bold North. So bundle up and have a great time!

From the first hello to the last goodbye, our 10,000 Crew 52 volunteers will greet you with a warm reception, providing helpful tips about everything Minnesota has to offer. Enjoy winter fun and a free concert at Super Bowl LIVE presented by Verizon, where Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis are serving as Minnesota Music Ambassadors, celebrating our unique Minnesota Sound.

Don't forget to visit Super Bowl Experience Driven by Genesis in our Minneapolis Convention Center, a football theme park that started right here in Minnesota at Super Bowl XXVI. Enjoy Super Bowl-related entertainment, dining, and activities across the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul and nearby Bloomington.

Thank you to all of the Minnesotans and visitors from across the world who are joining us to celebrate Super Bowl LII. We hope you have a great time – and will come back again and again.

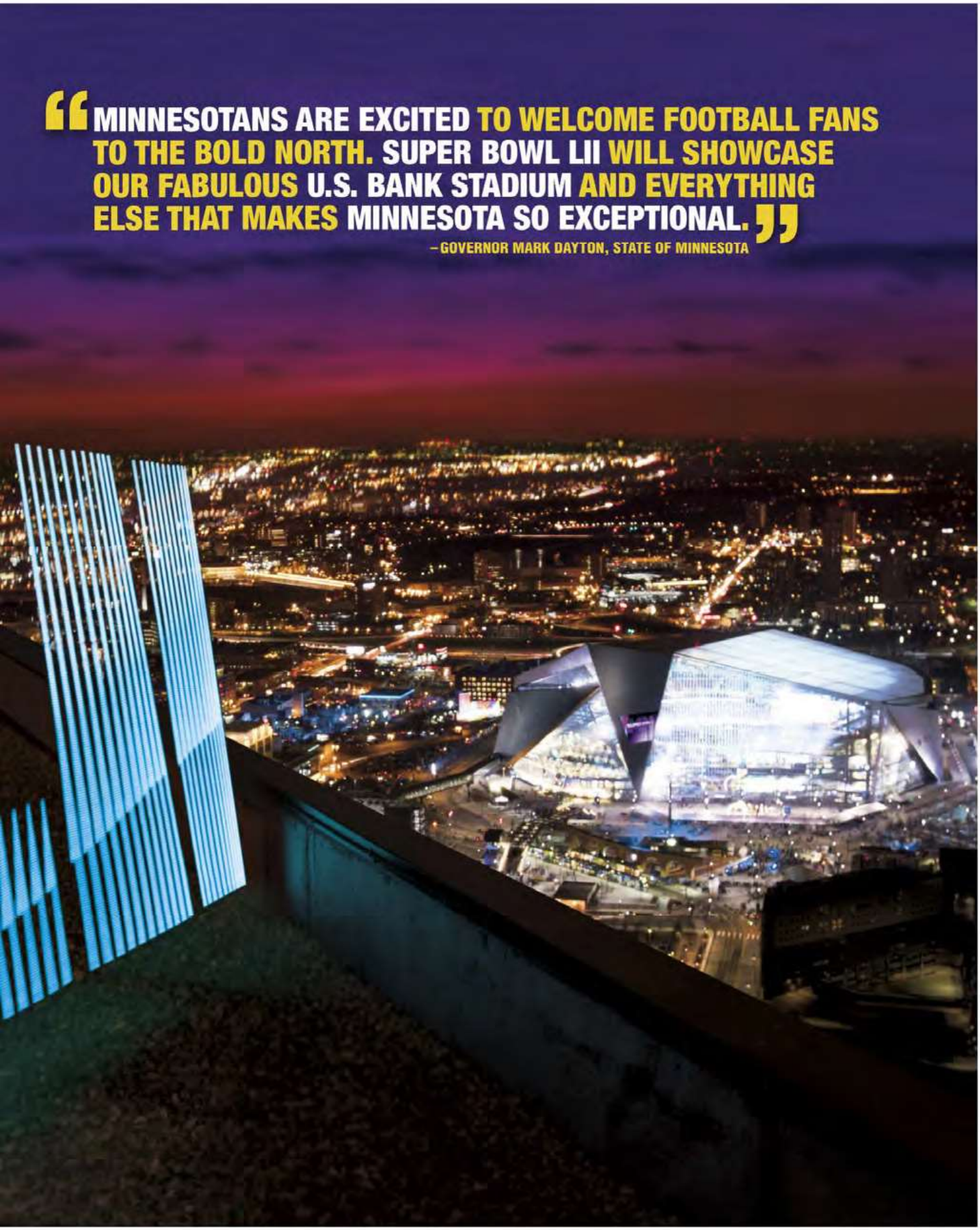
Boldly,

Maureen Bausch

CEO,
Minnesota Super Bowl Host Committee

MINNESOTA
SUPER BOWL LII HOST COMMITTEE

FROM THE SPORTS LIBRARY OF


"MINNESOTANS ARE EXCITED TO WELCOME FOOTBALL FANS TO THE BOLD NORTH. SUPER BOWL LII WILL SHOWCASE OUR FABULOUS U.S. BANK STADIUM AND EVERYTHING ELSE THAT MAKES MINNESOTA SO EXCEPTIONAL."
–GOVERNOR MARK DAYTON, STATE OF MINNESOTA

Clockwise from top: Viktor the Viking helps celebrate a Legacy Fund grant. 10,000 Crew 52 volunteers get revved up at a training rally. The Legacy Fund kicks off 52 Weeks of Giving in the Bold North. The Legacy Fund encourages kids to eat healthy and be active.

CREW 52 POWERED BY Cub Kindness

Super Bowl LII Succeeds as a Statewide Celebration

"SUPER BOWL LII IS COMING TO MINNESOTA!"

As the news reverberated across Vikings Country back in May 2014, it became clear that all Minnesotans were ready to share in the excitement. Thus, the Minnesota Super Bowl Host Committee (MNSBHC) was born, becoming just the fourth Host Committee to take a statewide approach as it embarked to build a Bold North Super Bowl experience where the entire state could join in the celebration.

Minnesotans from across the state stepped up to volunteer for Crew 52, our team of volunteers working to make Super Bowl LII a positive, memorable experience for our one million guests. More than 10,000 people are part of Crew 52, hailing from more than 500 cities and towns across the state. They had a little encouragement from someone with Minnesota cred of his own: former Vikings linebacker Chad Greenway, who is serving as Minnesota's Crew 52 Captain.

"Thousands of Minnesotans are showing their pride and giving our guests from across the world a warm welcome in the Bold North," said Greenway, a first-round draft pick in 2006 who played 10 seasons with the Vikings. "We couldn't have better ambassadors for Minnesota."

Hosting Super Bowl LII is an opportunity to shine a spotlight on Minnesota, but more importantly, it's an opportunity to leave a lasting legacy for a better state. That is why the Minnesota Super Bowl Legacy Fund has provided more than $5 million – supported by a $1 million grant from the NFL Foundation and many other generous philanthropic organizations – in grants to communities across the state to improve the health and wellness for kids. Why health and wellness? For the first time ever, children born today have a shorter life expectancy than their parents. The Legacy Fund focused on getting kids moving again, eating better, and building healthy habits. During its 52 Weeks of Giving campaign, the Legacy Fund traveled the state – from the Iron Range to the Iowa border – providing a new grant each week.

"It's been an honor to travel our beautiful state and partner with so many great leaders to build a healthier future for the next generation of Minnesotans," said Dana Nelson, VP of Legacy and Community Partnerships for the MNSBHC.

Minnesota pride is front and center at Super Bowl LIVE presented by Verizon, the free and open-to-the-public 10-day fan festival on Nicollet Mall in downtown Minneapolis. Throughout the festival, guests can experience life in the Bold North. From Prince Night and other free concerts to larger-than-life ice sculptures and lots of winter fun, there is truly something for everyone to enjoy.

"Minnesotans are a warm, generous, and enthusiastic bunch," said Maureen Bausch, CEO for MNSBHC. "We are so grateful to share the excitement of Super Bowl LII with a state that proudly calls this the best place on earth."

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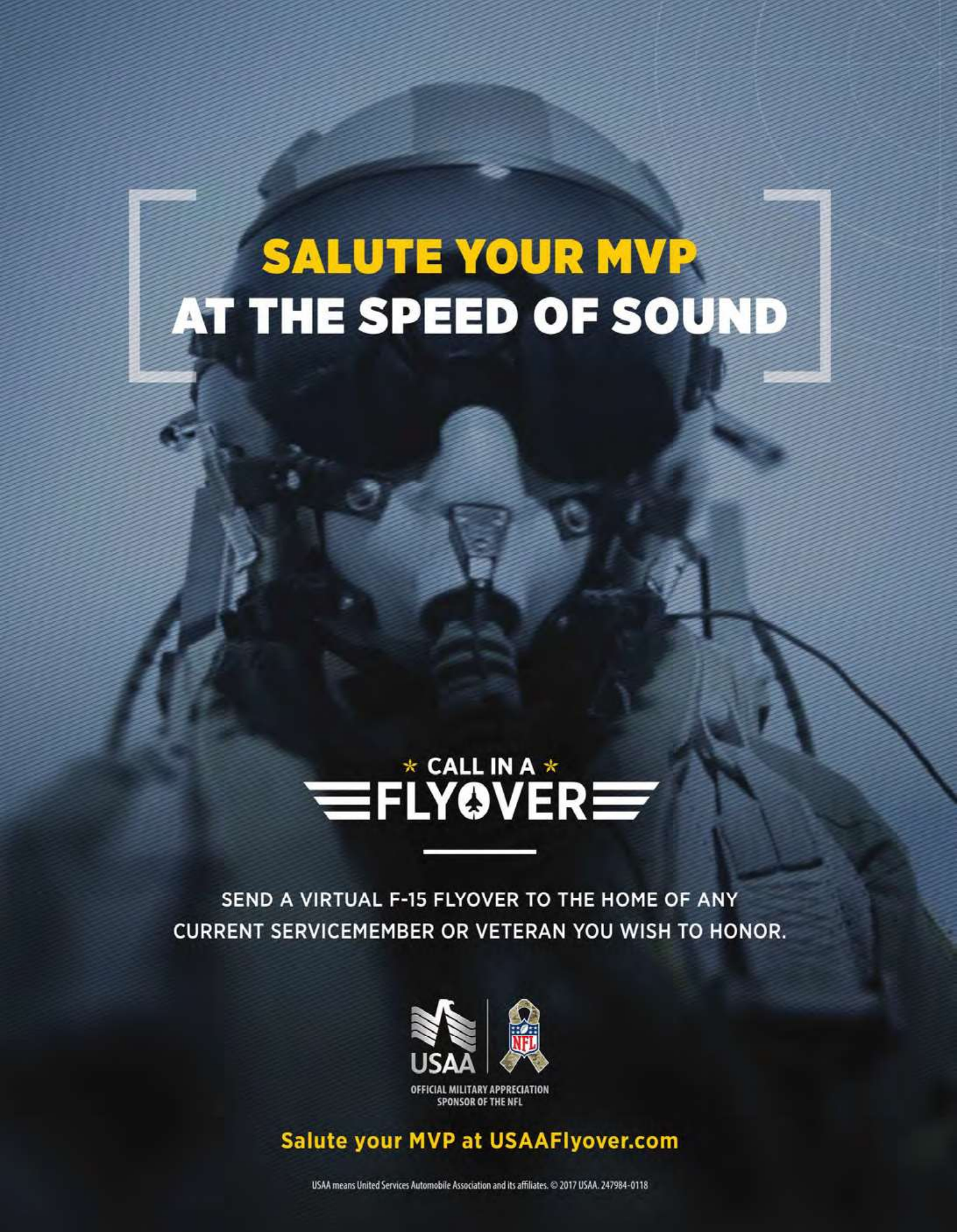
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NFL SHOP at SUPER BOWL
presented by VISA

- **MAIN STORE (35,000 sq. ft.)**
  - **Super Bowl Experience Driven by Genesis**
    Minneapolis Convention Center Ballroom A/B and Hall A, 1301 2nd Avenue S, Minneapolis
    Dates: Jan. 27 - Feb. 3
- **OTHER LOCATIONS**
  - **Super Bowl LIVE presented by Verizon**
    700 Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis
    Dates: Jan. 26 - Feb. 4
  - **Mall of America**
    206 South Avenue, 2nd Floor, Bloomington
    Dates: Dec. 18 - Feb. 7
  - **IDS Center**
    510 South Marquette Avenue (Corner of South 5th Street & South Marquette Avenue), Minneapolis
    Dates: Jan. 26 - Feb. 7
  - **Gavidae Commons Skyway**
    651 Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis
    Dates: Jan. 26 - Feb. 7
  - **Hilton Minneapolis**
    1001 Marquette Avenue, South Minneapolis
    Dates: Feb. 1 - Feb. 4
  - **Minneapolis Airport Marriott**
    2020 East American Boulevard, Bloomington
    Dates: Feb. 1 - Feb. 4
  - **Mystic Lake Casino Hotel**
    2400 Mystic Lake Boulevard, Prior Lake
    Dates: Feb. 1 - Feb. 4
  - **Various Hotels**
    Minneapolis, Bloomington, and St. Paul
    Dates: Feb. 1 - Feb. 4

Experience the Fun!

THE NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE is showcasing Super Bowl Experience Driven by Genesis at the Minneapolis Convention Center from Jan. 27 through Feb. 3. Super Bowl Experience is the most exciting continuous event surrounding Super Bowl LII – pro football's interactive theme park offering participatory games, youth football clinics, merchandise from NFL Shop at Super Bowl presented by Visa, and autograph sessions with NFL players and legends.

Super Bowl Experience also features personalized digital photos, 40-yard dash and vertical jump contests against NFL players on LED screens, a virtual reality experience, an enhanced Super Bowl rings display, and a new NFL Draft set! Share your experiences using **#SBLII**.

For exclusive access to Super Bowl Experience, and the opportunity to win tickets to Super Bowl LII, register for Fan Mobile Pass by visiting **nfl.com/fanmobilepass**.

In addition, SBXTRA allows fans priority access to their favorite Super Bowl Experience attractions all day, beginning at the time slot that you purchased. Look for the SBXTRA sign at the following attractions: Autograph Stage (one autograph for each SBXTRA purchase); Vince Lombardi Trophy (one photo for each SBXTRA purchase); Interactive Games (unlimited access); and the Play Football Field (unlimited access).

SBXTRA tickets – which are limited to 50 each hour – may be purchased for $55 for both children and adults. This ticket includes a general ticket to Super Bowl Experience (required for entry into the event).

SUPER BOWL EXPERIENCE TICKETS

Tickets are available for purchase on **nfl.com/SuperBowlExperienceOnSale**, by calling (866) TIX-4NFL (849-4635), and at the box office one hour prior to doors opening each day. To avoid lengthy lines at the box office, the pre-purchasing of tickets online or over the phone is recommended. Ticket prices include all games and attractions.

HOURS OF OPERATION	
Saturday, Jan. 27:	10 a.m. – 10 p.m.
Sunday, Jan. 28:	10 a.m. – 8 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 29:	3 p.m. – 8 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 30:	3 p.m. – 8 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 31:	3 p.m. – 10 p.m.
Thursday, Feb. 1:	10 a.m. – 10 p.m.
Friday, Feb. 2:	10 a.m. – 10 p.m.
Saturday, Feb. 3:	10 a.m. – 8 p.m.

PRICING	
Adults	$35
Children 12 and under	$25
SBXtra (Fast Pass)	$55 for children and adults

Super Bowl LIVE in the Bold North!

MINNESOTANS KNOW HOW TO HAVE FUN in the outdoors and we encourage our Super Bowl visitors to join us! Bundle up and have some Bold North fun at Super Bowl LIVE presented by Verizon on Nicollet Mall in downtown Minneapolis, the site of an epic 10-day fan festival, free and open to the public, leading up to Super Bowl LII.

Pose for a photo in the Super Bowl LII snow globe … take a selfie next to our larger-than-life ice sculptures … watch snowmobiles fly through the air … glide across downtown Minneapolis at the Built Ford Tough Sleigh Ride … watch free live concerts. There is something for everyone at Super Bowl LIVE presented by Verizon. Join us for food, fun, and authentic Minnesota experiences.

Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis are the Minnesota Super Bowl Host Committee's Minnesota Music Ambassadors and the force behind the free concert series at the Verizon Up Stage at Ice Mountain. The series will feature the "Minnesota Sound" here in the land of Prince and opens January 26 with Tony Award-winning artist Idina Menzel performing "Let It Go" from the Disney movie *Frozen*.

Idina Menzel

Prince Night will honor the late Minnesota-born icon with performances from Sheila E., Morris Day and the Time, and The Revolution, along with a community sing-along of Prince's legendary song "Purple Rain."

Free concerts aren't the only feature of Super Bowl LIVE presented by Verizon. Super Bowl visitors can watch cross-country skiing, skijoring, fat tire bike racing, and more at American Birkebeiner International Bridge, a 200-foot bridge spanning across Nicollet Mall.

"Super Bowl LIVE presented by Verizon is our opportunity to showcase the best of Minnesota," said Maureen Bausch, CEO of the Minnesota Super Bowl Host Committee. "From our Minnesota Sound and outdoor winter sports to our creative cuisine and nightlife, Nicollet Mall will be a shining example of our Bold North lifestyle. With a northern city hosting the Super Bowl, we are leaning into what makes Minnesota unique. We created Super Bowl LIVE to intentionally invite our visitors to spend time outdoors and enjoy an unforgettable and quintessential Minnesota experience."

For more information on Super Bowl LIVE presented by Verizon, please visit the Minnesota Super Bowl Host Committee's website **mnsuperbowl.com/sblive**.

Mall of America

SUPER BOWL LII
FAN GALLERY

FAN GALLERY AT MALL OF AMERICA®

The Fan Gallery will be located at the Mall of America (north side, level 3) from Monday, Jan. 29 - Friday, Feb. 2. The free Fan Gallery offers a unique opportunity for fans to watch broadcasters, professional athletes, and guest celebrities in action during Super Bowl week. Don't miss the chance to be part of the energy and excitement leading up to Super Bowl LII. The Fan Gallery will be open 8 a.m. through closing each day (subject to change).

SUPER BOWL LIVE HOURS

Super Bowl LIVE presented by Verizon
Hours of Operation:

Friday, Jan. 26 ..... 4 p.m. – 10 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 27 ..... 10 a.m. – 10 p.m.
Sunday, Jan. 28 ..... 10 a.m. – 9 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 29 ..... 4 p.m. – 9 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 30 ..... 4 p.m. – 9 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 31 ..... 4 p.m. – 9 p.m.
Thursday, Feb. 1 ..... 4 p.m. – 9 p.m.
Friday, Feb. 2 ..... 10 a.m. – 10 p.m.
Saturday, Feb. 3 ..... 10 a.m. – 10 p.m.
Sunday, Feb. 4 ..... 12 noon – 3 p.m.

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Super Bowl Opening Night marks the start of Super Bowl week for fans and the teams.

Eric Gay/AP Images

Larry Fitzgerald, who shared the 2016 Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year Award with Eli Manning, speaks at last year's *NFL Honors*.

Barry Wilner/AP Images

The NFL Players Choir

Super Bowl Gospel Celebration

TUNE IN
SUPER BOWL OPENING NIGHT FUELED BY GATORADE

Jan. 29 • Xcel Energy Center, St. Paul • 5:30 p.m. (CT)

Be among the first to see players and coaches of the Super Bowl teams address fans and thousands of media members after they arrive in Minnesota. Super Bowl Opening Night Fueled by Gatorade takes place at the Xcel Energy Center, with doors opening at 5:30 p.m. The NFC team interview session begins at 7 p.m., followed by the AFC team at 9 p.m. NFL Legends and team cheerleaders and mascots will be in attendance, and fans will receive a free Super Bowl gift bag and radio. NFL Network will broadcast the event live.

NFL HONORS

Feb. 3 • Cyrus Northrop Memorial Auditorium • 5 p.m. (CT)

NFL Honors is the National Football League's annual awards show recognizing the League's best players, performances, and plays from the current season. The two-hour primetime special will air nationally on Feb. 3, the eve of the Super Bowl LII, at 9 p.m. (ET and PT) on NBC – after being taped earlier that evening at the University of Minnesota's Cyrus Northrop Memorial Auditorium. The 2018 Pro Football Hall of Fame class will be introduced for the first time and the NFL and the Associated Press will announce their annual accolades, with the winners on hand to accept their awards.

LISTEN
SUPER BOWL GOSPEL CELEBRATION

Feb. 1 • Benson Great Hall, Arden Hills • 7:30 p.m. (CT)

The 19th annual Super Bowl Gospel Celebration will be a star-studded music jubilation that brings together faith and football. NFL Players, top Gospel, Contemporary, Christian, and mainstream GRAMMY® Award-winning artists, and other special guests will appear on one stage to deliver an evening of uplifting music and inspirational messages. This year's Super Bowl Gospel Celebration will continue with the theme of "United in Love." Performers include The NFL Players Choir, featuring past and present NFL players, as well as Erica Campbell, Sheila E., Sounds of Blackness, and Donnie McClurkin. Tickets are available at **ticketmaster.com**, and you can learn more at **SuperBowlGospel.com.** A one-hour special will air on BET Network on Feb. 3.

LEARN
"TESTIFY" EXHIBIT

Jan. 8 - Feb. 6 • Cargill Hall – Hennepin County Library

Pro Football Hall of Famer and former Minnesota Supreme Court Justice Alan Page and Diane Sims Page are presenting "Testify: Americana from Slavery to Today." Supported in part by the NFL Foundation, the wide-ranging exhibit features art and artifacts from pivotal eras in American history while also providing a platform for visitors to share their thoughts, feelings, and personal experiences. The exhibit is open during library hours.

DINE

SUPER BOWL BREAKFAST

Feb. 3 • Hilton Minneapolis • 8 a.m. (CT)

The 2018 Super Bowl Breakfast will feature the presentation of the 2018 Bart Starr Award for outstanding character, integrity, and leadership on and off the field. This year's recipient is Baltimore Ravens tight end Benjamin Watson. The program also will include Super Bowl champion coach Tony Dungy, Vikings greats Jeff Siemon, Alan Page, Greg Coleman, Chuck Foreman, and Doug Sutherland, and emcee Akbar Gbaja-Biamila, a former NFL player who now co-hosts *American Ninja Warrior*. Tickets can be purchased at **superbowlbreakfast.com**.

TASTE OF THE NFL

Feb. 3 • St. Paul RiverCentre • 7 p.m. (CT)

Join Taste of the NFL for the 27th annual Party with a Purpose®, the non-profit's signature food, football, and charity event. The event pairs extraordinary chefs from every NFL city with current, Hall of Fame, and alumni players from each franchise. In addition to tasting gourmet dishes, attendees will enjoy music from classic American rock band O.A.R. (Of A Revolution) and have the opportunity to bid on more than 250 unique items. This year's national culinary host is Andrew Zimmern, the co-creator, host, and executive producer for several Travel Channel series, including *Bizarre Foods with Andrew Zimmern*. Former NFL linebacker Ben Leber is the national player host. Taste of the NFL's programs and events have raised and donated in excess of $26 million to food banks and nonprofit organizations. Tickets are available at **tasteoftheNFL.com**.

PARTICIPATE

KICKOFF TO REBUILD

Feb. 2 • South Minneapolis • 8 a.m. - 2 p.m. (CT)

For the past 23 years, Rebuilding Together has partnered with the NFL to host community revitalization projects in Super Bowl cities across the country. This year, Rebuilding Together Twin Cities will host a two-day project to rehabilitate six homes and develop a community garden in the Bryant neighborhood of South Minneapolis, offering residents access to fresh produce and opportunities to connect with their neighbors, while also working to establish a community kitchen. As the result of this partnership, the Bryant neighborhood will be a stronger, more vibrant community. Find out more and volunteer at **rebuildingtogether.org/ktr**.

NFL ALUMNI ARTISAN HOME TOUR

Feb. 3 • Minneapolis/St. Paul • 8 a.m. - 3 p.m. (CT)

The Builders Association of the Twin Cities and the NFL Alumni Association have partnered to present the NFL Alumni Artisan Home Tour. Spend Saturday morning of Super Bowl weekend riding in comfortable motor coaches to some of the Twin Cities' most amazing homes. Afterwards, you'll attend a special lunch/reception hosted by NFL Alumni at the historic Lafayette Club in Minnetonka Beach. Proceeds benefit the BATC Foundation and NFL Alumni Association. Learn more at **nflalumni.org**.

Matthew Slater accepts the 2017 Bart Starr Award at last year's Super Bowl Breakfast.

Chef Drew Nieporent (center) and N.Y. Giants player rep Bill Ard (far right) at last year's Taste of the NFL.

Rebuilding Together will host a revitalization project in the Bryant neighborhood in South Minneapolis.

Patriots receiver Julian Edelman (center) appeared on *NFL GameDay Prime* following Super Bowl LI.

Bert Lieberman/NFL

NFL Network: Live in Minneapolis

NFL NETWORK IS THE ONE-STOP SHOP for all things Super Bowl LII in Minneapolis. For the 15th year, NFL Network is providing more than 80 hours of on-location Super Bowl coverage.

On Super Bowl Sunday alone, NFL Network has more than 11 hours of live pregame and postgame coverage, starting at 9 a.m. (ET) with a special eight-and-a-half-hour edition of *NFL GameDay Morning* from U.S. Bank Stadium. Following the game, *NFL GameDay Prime* provides postgame analysis and interviews with the Super Bowl LII champions.

Good Morning Football kicks off NFL Network's Super Bowl week coverage starting Monday, Jan. 29, at 7 a.m. (ET), while expanded, on-location coverage from Minneapolis begins Jan. 31. Throughout the week, *Super Bowl LIVE presented by Verizon* – which airs Monday at 4 p.m. and Tuesday through Saturday at 1 p.m. – provides daily updates, analysis, interviews, and practice reports. Recap the day's action each evening with *NFL Total Access* at 7 p.m., ahead of *Super Bowl Prime* at 9 p.m., which airs Wednesday-Friday live from Minneapolis. Top off Super Bowl week coverage with NFL Network's special edition of *The Timeline: The Helmet Catch*, premiering Feb. 2 at 10 p.m. – on the eve of the 10th anniversary of Super Bowl XLII.

Live from the Xcel Energy Center, NFL Network airs *Super Bowl Opening Night Fueled by Gatorade* on Monday, Jan. 29, at 8 p.m., as the Super Bowl teams address the media for the first time in Minnesota. Then, on Saturday, Feb. 3, *Super Bowl Saturday Night* offers pre-show coverage of *NFL Honors*, starting at 8 p.m., with post-show highlights on NFL Network's *NFL Total Access*.

NFL Network also will televise press conferences throughout the week, including those of NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell and *Pepsi Super Bowl Halftime Show* headliner Justin Timberlake.

NFL Network's on-air talent are some of the most recognizable names in sports television, with multiple Emmy nominations and NFL accolades. For more programming information, please visit **NFL.com/network** and **NFLCommunications.com**.

STAY CONNECTED TO THE SUPER BOWL

Apps For Those in Minnesota ... and Beyond

SUPER BOWL LII – FAN MOBILE PASS:

For fans going to the game and those in Minnesota for all the events leading up to kickoff, Super Bowl LII – Fan Mobile Pass is the ultimate companion app to enrich your Super Bowl experience. It will host all of the celebrations during Super Bowl week and includes a complete schedule with maps so fans can find details about Super Bowl events. Fans can use the app to learn the best way to get to U.S. Bank Stadium, discover what's going on before the game at GameDay Fan Plaza, and more. It will also be home to Fan Mobile Pass, which fans can use to check in at specified activations and collect badges at Super Bowl week events. While at the game, fans can use the app to watch Super Bowl commercials, highlights, and pre-order merchandise for quick pick up. Download the app by visiting NFL.com/SBApp or the app store. Available on iOS, Android, and Windows 8.1+ smartphones.

NFL MOBILE:

From showing every playoff game and Super Bowl LII live (Verizon smartphone customers only) to trending videos on NFL Now to replays of every game with NFL Game Pass (subscription required), NFL Mobile from Verizon is the must-have app for every fan! Stay on top of the game with breaking NFL news, highlights, stats, and more wherever you are, whenever you want it. Visit NFL.com/Mobile to learn more. Available on iOS, Android, and Windows smartphones.

- **Have questions** about gameday or Super Bowl week events? Tag your posts with #SBQuestions
- **To share** your Super Bowl experience, tag your posts and photos with #SBLII
- **Visit SuperBowl.com** and follow @SuperBowl for more information about the events and excitement of Super Bowl LII

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Please see additional Important Safety Information about LIVALO on the next page.

LIVALO® (pitavastatin) tablets (LIV-ah-lo) – Consumer Brief Summary Information

Information for Patients about LIVALO® (pitavastatin) tablets:

Please read this information carefully before you, or your family member, start taking LIVALO and each time your prescription is refilled in case anything has changed or new information has become available. This information is not meant to take the place of discussions with your healthcare provider. Talk with your healthcare provider or pharmacist if there is something you do not understand or if you want to learn more about LIVALO. Always follow your healthcare provider's instructions for taking LIVALO.

What is LIVALO?

- LIVALO is a prescription medicine that belongs to a group of cholesterol-lowering medicines called "statins."
- LIVALO, along with diet, lowers total cholesterol, "bad" cholesterol (LDL-C) and triglycerides. It can also raise "good" cholesterol (HDL-C).
- The effect of LIVALO on cardiovascular morbidity and mortality has not been determined.

What is the most important information I should talk with my doctor about?

- Call your healthcare provider or get help right away if you experience any symptoms of an allergic reaction, such as rash, itching, or hives.
- Muscle problems may be an early sign of rare, serious conditions. Tell your doctor right away if you have any unexplained muscle pain, tenderness, or weakness particularly if accompanied by malaise or fever, or if these muscle signs or symptoms persist after discontinuing LIVALO.
- Serious liver problems have been reported rarely in patients taking statins, including LIVALO. Your doctor should do liver tests before you start, and if you have symptoms of liver problems while you are taking LIVALO. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you feel more tired than usual, have a loss of appetite, upper belly pain, dark-colored urine, or yellowing of the skin or eyes.
- Increases in blood sugar levels have been reported with statins, including LIVALO.
- Tell your doctor about all your medical conditions and medications you take including nonprescription medicines, vitamins, or herbal supplements.
- Tell your doctor about your alcohol use.

Who should NOT take LIVALO?

Do not take LIVALO if:

- You have a known allergy to LIVALO or any of its ingredients.
- You have active liver problems which may include some abnormal liver test results.
- You are nursing, pregnant; or may become pregnant, as it may harm the baby.
- You are currently taking cyclosporine.

What are the most common side effects of LIVALO?

The most common side effects of LIVALO in clinical studies were:

- Back pain
- Constipation
- Diarrhea
- Muscle pain
- Pain in the legs or arms

This is not a complete list of side effects. Talk to your healthcare provider for more information. **You are encouraged to report negative side effects of all drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch or call 1-800-FDA-1088.**

Can other medications affect my treatment with LIVALO?

Yes, other medications may affect LIVALO; you should consult with your doctor if you take any of the following:

- Erythromycin
- Rifampin
- Gemfibrozil
- Colchicine
- Cyclosporine
- Other drugs for high cholesterol (i.e., fenofibrates, niacin)

What should I tell my doctor before taking LIVALO?

Tell your doctor if:

- You are allergic to LIVALO, or any of its ingredients; you may get a full list of ingredients from your doctor or pharmacist.
- You are having or have been told you have active liver or kidney disease.
- You are pregnant, think you are pregnant, are planning to become pregnant, or are breast-feeding.
- You are taking other medications, discuss all medication, both prescription and over-the-counter, with your doctor.
- You consume alcoholic beverages.
- You are diabetic or have been told you may develop diabetes as the doctor may wish you to monitor your blood glucose more closely.

How should I store and take LIVALO?

- Store LIVALO at room temperature, in a dry place, protected from light, and keep out of the reach of children.
- LIVALO can be taken at any time of day, with or without food.
- Swallow the tablet whole. Do not split, crush, dissolve, or chew.
- If you take too much LIVALO or you or someone else takes an overdose, call your doctor and/or local Poison Control Center.

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NBC Makes a Week of It

NBC's broadcast team of Al Michaels (left), Cris Collinsworth, and Michele Tafoya will call Super Bowl LII.

NBC SPORTS GROUP is presenting 80+ hours of comprehensive, week-long coverage from Super Bowl LII in Minnesota across the networks of NBCUniversal, including NBC, NBCSN, Golf Channel, MSNBC, CNBC, and Spanish-language networks Telemundo and Universo, leading up to kickoff on NBC and Universo.

Super Bowl LII on NBC marks the network's 19th Super Bowl broadcast. NBC's Emmy Award-winning team has extensive Super Bowl experience; it's the 10th Super Bowl assignment for Al Michaels, who joins Pat Summerall as the only television play-by-play voices to call 10 Super Bowls, while analyst Cris Collinsworth and sideline reporter Michele Tafoya are each working the Super Bowl for the fourth time.

Executive producer Fred Gaudelli and director Drew Esocoff are working their sixth Super Bowl together.

Dan Patrick hosts the network's pregame and postgame coverage alongside Liam McHugh, and will be joined by *NBC Football Night in America* teammates Tony Dungy, Rodney Harrison, and Mike Florio. NBC Sports voices Paul Burmeister, Kathryn Tappen, Rutledge Wood, Randy Moss (the veteran sports announcer/reporter), and Chris Simms also will appear during pregame coverage.

NBC Sports Group's comprehensive Super Bowl week and pregame coverage on NBC and NBCSN is led by executive producer Sam Flood. NBCUniversal's coverage of Super Bowl LII includes special on-site editions of *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*, *TODAY*, and *NBC Nightly News with Lester Holt*, as well as coverage on *Access* and *E! News*.

In addition, NBC will air the *NFL Honors* awards show in primetime on the eve of Super Bowl LII.

NBCSN is providing nearly 50 hours of on-site content, featuring live daily episodes of *The Dan Patrick Show* and *Pro Football Talk*. In addition, NBCSports.com, with *ProFootballTalk*, and NBC Sports Radio will have round-the-clock coverage for the whole week leading up to the game at U.S. Bank Stadium.

Telemundo and Universo combine to present NBC Sports Group's Spanish-language coverage, culminating with Super Bowl LII on Universo. Telemundo Deportes' commentators Edgar Lopez and Rene Giraldo will have the call on Universo, alongside sideline reporter Verónica Contreras.

NBCSports.com and the NBC Sports app will stream NBC's gameday coverage of Super Bowl LII.

WESTWOOD ONE RADIO GOES DEEP WITH ITS COVERAGE

Westwood One

For the 31st consecutive year and 45th time overall, Westwood One will serve as the exclusive network radio home of the Super Bowl. Beginning at 5 p.m. (ET), Kevin Harlan and Boomer Esiason will call the action to millions of listeners tuned in across 700 radio stations nationwide, in 175 countries, and nearly 250 ships at sea via the American Forces Radio Network. Fans also can hear the broadcast on SiriusXM, via the TuneIn Radio app, and on NFL Game Pass.

This is Esiason's 18th straight Super Bowl broadcast with Westwood One and Harlan's eighth. Super Bowl XXXI winning coach Mike Holmgren also will contribute throughout the game broadcast, while Tony Boselli and Ed Werder will patrol the sidelines for the network. Emmy Award-winning sportscaster Jim Gray hosts the pregame and halftime shows, along with Tom Brady and Larry Fitzgerald. Scott Graham and Coach Holmgren kick off Westwood One's live coverage from U.S. Bank Stadium with *Super Sunday* at 4 p.m.

The network's pregame coverage launches at 2 p.m. with *Super Bowl Preview* and *Super Bowl Insider*. Westwood One also will produce *Seven Days to Sunday – The Road to Super Bowl LII*. This hour-long preview show will air each night during the week leading up to Super Sunday.

Howard Deneroff is the executive producer of Westwood One Sports. Larry Costigan and Mike Eaby are coordinating producers.

Westwood One is the nation's leader in play-by-play radio sports; its other exclusive sports programming includes the Olympics, the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament and Final Four, the NHL, and The Masters.

Kevin Harlan

Boomer Esiason

Sean Rice/AP Images

GAMEDAY FAN PLAZA

Upon arrival to U.S. Bank Stadium, all Super Bowl LII ticketholders are invited to visit GameDay Fan Plaza from 1 p.m. - 5 p.m. before entering the stadium. Entertainment includes pep squads, ice skaters, the St. Paul Bouncing Team, unique photo opportunities, NFL Shop at Super Bowl presented by Visa, postcard-to-home stations, and MORE!

ON LOCATION EXPERIENCES

The official hospitality partner of the NFL, On Location gives you priority access to U.S. Bank Stadium and exclusive parties on Super Bowl Sunday. A Super Bowl LII game ticket and an On Location hospitality ticket are required for access into all party venues. On Location hospitality venues located within the stadium will open at 1:30 p.m., and hospitality located within the Armory will open at 1 p.m. Visit NFLONLOCATION.com to access exclusive NFL event experiences throughout the year!

MEET THE SUPER KID

Rochester, Minnesota, native Manasa Yerriboyina is this year's NFL PLAY 60 Super Kid. She gets the honor of handing off the game ball to an NFL official moments before the start of Super Bowl LII.

Young fans nationwide entered the NFL PLAY 60 Super Bowl Contest presented by Danimals on NFLRUSH.com. Manasa submitted a video showcasing her passion for staying physically active by showing off her dance moves, as this year's contest called for entrants to submit their best celebration dances.

Leslie Odom Jr.

P!NK

Music to Our Ears

TONY AND GRAMMY AWARD-winning performer Leslie Odom Jr. will sing "America The Beautiful" as part of Super Bowl LII pregame festivities. Odom Jr., an original cast member of the Tony Award-winning Broadway hit *Hamilton: An American Musical*, won the Tony for "Best Actor in a Musical" for his performance as 'Aaron Burr.' He most recently appeared in the movie *Murder on the Orient Express* and recently returned to the New York stage in a solo concert at Jazz at Lincoln Center.

International superstar P!NK will sing the national anthem at Super Bowl LII. The American singer, songwriter, and actress has sold more than 50 million album equivalents, has had 15 singles in the Top 10, and is the recipient of three Grammy Awards. Her seventh studio album, *Beautiful Trauma*, debuted at No. 1 on Billboard's 200 chart, and the album's first single, "What About Us," received a Grammy nomination for Best Pop Solo Performance.

Greg Olsen

Benjamin Watson

J.J. Watt

Photos by AP Images

MAN OF THE YEAR MOMENT

The legacy of past Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year winners will be recognized in an on-field ceremony at U.S. Bank Stadium prior to the kickoff of Super Bowl LII.

As the culmination of a weekend-long series of special events, these men and their families will be saluted for their contributions to the game and their communities, followed by the introduction of the 2017 recipient. This year's finalists are Carolina Panthers tight end Greg Olsen, Baltimore Ravens tight end Benjamin Watson, and Houston Texans defensive end J.J. Watt.

"For the first time in NFL history, Man of the Year winners will come together on the NFL's biggest stage," said NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell. "The NFL is proud to host these remarkable leaders and recognize their impact on the community."

Considered the League's most prestigious honor, the Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year Award presented by Nationwide recognizes an NFL player for outstanding community service activities off the field as well as excellence on the field. The 32 nominees for the 2017 award were announced in December (for the full list, please see page 181).

The winner will have $250,000 donated to his charity of choice and $250,000 donated to expand Character Playbook across the country. The other finalists and the remaining 29 nominees will also have donations in their name made to their charity of choice and to expand Character Playbook. All donations are courtesy of the NFL Foundation, Nationwide, and United Way Worldwide.

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It's Justin Time!

Global superstar Justin Timberlake will headline the *Pepsi Super Bowl LII Halftime Show* at U.S. Bank Stadium.

A multi-talented actor and musician, Timberlake just released his fourth studio album, *Man Of The Woods*. The Memphis, Tenn., native has won 10 Grammys and numerous other awards. He rapidly became a highly respected musician, winning two Grammys for his debut solo album, *Justified*, and has been recognized for a range of performances, including Best Male Pop Vocal Performance, Best Pop Vocal Album, Best Dance Recording, and Best Music Video. Timberlake was nominated for an Academy Award for the song "Can't Stop The Feeling" from the film *Trolls*, for which he won his most recent Grammy.

A gifted actor, Timberlake has appeared in diverse films that include *Alpha Dog*, *Black Snake Moan*, *Shrek the Third*, *The Social Network*, and the recently released *Wonder Wheel*. He has also won four Emmys for his appearances on *Saturday Night Live*.

This will be Timberlake's third time performing on the Super Bowl Halftime stage, giving him the distinction of having the most appearances by an individual entertainer. He previously performed at Super Bowls XXXV and XXXVIII.

The *Pepsi Super Bowl Halftime Show*, the most-watched musical event of the year, is an NFL Network production and will be executive produced by Ricky Kirshner and directed by Hamish Hamilton. Last year's show was the most-watched musical event of all time across all platforms and the most-watched Super Bowl Halftime performance in history through broadcast and digital channels. It reached more than 150 million unique people, garnering more than 80 million views and totaling 260 million minutes watched.

RAZOR'S EDGE

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SUPER BOWL GLORY AND DEFEAT CAN COME DOWN TO A SINGLE PLAY … AND IT'S NOT ALWAYS AT GAME'S END.

BY D. ORLANDO LEDBETTER

A GREAT SUPER BOWL IS OFTEN DEFINED by a great ending.

But those endings never tell the whole story and sometimes don't even tell the biggest story.

Think about it. For all the heart-stopping, momentum-swinging, this-changes-everything plays in Super Bowl LI – and that list is extensive – the one that meant the most to the Patriots' comeback was turned in by linebacker Dont'a Hightower.

It didn't win the game, it didn't go for a touchdown, and it came with his team still trailing by 16 points midway through the fourth quarter. Yet Hightower's strip-sack of Falcons quarterback Matt Ryan at the Atlanta 25-yard line – and the resulting fumble recovery by teammate Alan Branch – was crucial to New England's chances. It not only put the ball back in the hands of a suddenly hot Tom Brady, it created a short field, saving critical time in a battle against both opponent and clock.

"I thought Hightower's sack was a huge play for us," said Patriots coach Bill Belichick, whose team would score a TD on the ensuing drive, after the game. "We really needed that. It's hard to beat Atlanta, who is a very opportunistic and a good turnover team. We turned the ball over (twice in the first half) … so to be able to get one back was big."

The play itself required perfect execution and a bit of luck.

"Earlier, (Falcons running back Devonta) Freeman had me in protection and I was a little bit closer to the line of scrimmage, so he kind of saw me," Hightower explained. "I guess this time he didn't. I'm

Robert Deutsch/USA TODAY Sports

Patriots linebacker Dont'a Hightower (54) knocks the ball loose from Falcons QB Matt Ryan in the fourth quarter of Super Bowl LI, a turning point in New England's comeback win.

Prior to Mike Jones' game-saving tackle in Super Bowl XXXIV, Isaac Bruce had a 73-yard TD catch that broke a fourth-quarter tie and provided the winning points for the Rams.

not sure. I was able to get by him, and by the time he realized I was there, it was a little too late."

Without that play, chances are it's the Falcons who have the victory confetti raining down on them from the NRG Stadium rafters.

Hall of Fame quarterback Kurt Warner knows exactly how sharp that razor's edge is. He lived it not once, not twice, but three times on the Super Bowl stage. Most fans remember the end of those games – Super Bowls XXXIV, XXXVI, and XLIII – and with good reason: They all came down to the final seconds. But those tense closing moments were set up by huge plays along the way.

"The bottom line in sports is that the difference between quote, unquote, winning and losing is so small," Warner says. "I look at those three Super Bowls. I could be sitting here 3-0, because the last time I left the game in a meaningful situation, my team was tied or ahead in all of them.

"But I could very easily be 0-3."

The one he did win came against Tennessee in Super Bowl XXXIV, when Mike Jones' tackle of Titans wide receiver Kevin Dyson just shy of the end zone left the crowd in Atlanta's Georgia Dome wondering, "Is he in? Did he get in?" He did not, allowing Warner and the St. Louis Rams to prevail, 23-16.

If the Titans had won, they would have been able to point to their defense as the chief reason. The first six times the Rams had the ball, they drove inside the Tennessee 20-yard line, but all the "Greatest Show on Turf" had to show for it were three field goals and a single touchdown.

The Rams, meanwhile, kept critical points off the board when Todd Lyght blocked an Al Del Greco field goal attempt in the third quarter. And they scored their winning points when Warner, on the first play from scrimmage after the Titans had tied the game late, took a shot down the field and hit Isaac Bruce for a 73-yard touchdown. It was his only completion of the fourth quarter.

MIKE JONES' TACKLE OF TITANS WIDE RECEIVER KEVIN DYSON JUST SHY OF THE END ZONE LEFT THE GEORGIA DOME CROWD WONDERING, "IS HE IN? DID HE GET IN?" HE DID NOT, ALLOWING THE ST. LOUIS RAMS TO PREVAIL.

Warner and the Rams made it back to the Super Bowl two years later, but lost to the Patriots when Adam Vinatieri made a 48-yard field goal as time expired. It remains one of the most remarkable upsets in Super Bowl history.

Everyone remembers the field goal – and even the Patriots' final drive – but just as critical were the three turnovers New England forced that produced the team's first 17 points. Midway through the second

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Ty Law put New England's upset of the Rams in Super Bowl XXXVI in motion with his 47-yard interception-return TD.

Reggie Harrison (46) blocked a punt for a safety that shifted momentum to the Steelers in Super Bowl X.

quarter, with the Patriots trailing, 3-0, cornerback Ty Law perfectly read an out-pattern route by Bruce, stepped in front of Warner's pass for an interception, and raced 47 yards for a touchdown.

In a flash, the tone of the game had changed. A Terrell Buckley fumble recovery set up another Patriots TD and an Otis Smith interception led to a Vinatieri field goal, points that provided New England the cushion it needed when the Rams made their fourth-quarter comeback.

Seven years later, Warner had resurrected his career with the Arizona Cardinals and had his team on the precipice of victory in Super Bowl XLIII … until the Steelers' Santonio Holmes made perhaps the prettiest catch in Super Bowl history.

Yet think how differently that game may have played out if Warner's pass intended for Anquan Boldin late in the first half had been caught for a TD instead of intercepted by Pittsburgh's James Harrison and returned 100 yards for a score. What would have been a 14-10 Arizona halftime lead was instead a 17-7 deficit. Even on that play, if Harrison had been tackled at any point during his romp down the field, it would have saved the Cardinals seven points, since he crossed the goal line after the clock ran out.

"I've come to reconcile it," Warner says of his wins and losses. "You understand in the Super Bowl, it's great teams and great players against other great teams and great players."

Sometimes, you can just sense that turning-point play. Early in the fourth quarter of Super Bowl X, Pittsburgh trailed Dallas, 10-7, and hadn't scored since midway through the first quarter. But then Reggie Harrison blocked a Cowboys punt, sending the ball out of the end zone for a safety and narrowing the deficit to a single point.

IN SUPER BOWL XLIII, KURT WARNER HAD THE CARDINALS ON THE PRECIPICE OF VICTORY … UNTIL THE STEELERS' SANTONIO HOLMES MADE PERHAPS THE PRETTIEST CATCH IN SUPER BOWL HISTORY.

From there, the Steelers' offense came to life, scoring on its next three possessions, capped by the moment everyone remembers: Terry Bradshaw's bomb to the acrobatic Lynn Swann on a play called "68 Basic."

"I was just going to throw it as far as I could and Lynn Swann was going to catch up to it," Bradshaw says of the 64-yard TD pass.

With those plays and, don't forget, a game-ending end zone interception by Glen Edwards, the Steelers beat the Cowboys, 21-17.

Pittsburgh needed another big play from a wide receiver in Super Bowl XIV. Though heavily favored, the Steelers trailed the Rams, 19-17, early

Jerry Rice's sensational 27-yard catch on the 49ers' final drive in Super Bowl XXIII set up the game-winning touchdown.

in the fourth quarter. That was until Bradshaw launched one of his trademark aerials to John Stallworth, who was only open because Rams safety Eddie Brown jumped in the box instead of going deep with the receiver. The 73-yard touchdown propelled the Steelers to a 31-19 victory.

The Cincinnati Bengals haven't been as fortunate on Super Bowl Sunday. "Who Dey" nation has been on the losing end of two razor-thin Super Bowls, both to the Joe Montana-led 49ers. Still, in Super Bowl XVI, the 49ers needed big plays from their defense to come out on top, 26-21. Backup linebacker Dan Bunz had a key stop on running back Charles Alexander to help preserve the victory.

In Super Bowl XXIII, Montana marched the 49ers down the field in laser-focused fashion before tossing the game-winning touchdown to wide receiver John Taylor with 34 seconds left to play. That moment – and Taylor's subsequent leap of jubilation – is captured on highlight films everywhere. Yet it was Montana's second-and-20 strike to Jerry Rice that kept momentum going on that drive. Rice caught the ball as he crossed the middle of the field, then evaded several tacklers to pick up 27 yards for a first down at the Bengals 18.

The 49ers' common denominator in those two wins? Montana.

"You'd be hard-pressed to tell the difference between Joe at the first Cincinnati game and the second one," says San Francisco guard Randy Cross, who retired after the team's 20-16 triumph in Super Bowl XXIII. "Same guy. Same calm. Same unfair advantage having him on your side."

For Cross, the second Super Bowl win over the Bengals was particularly enchanting.

"That drive is still my favorite NFL Films moment," he says. "They've got a camera on (Bengals coach) Sam Wyche as we're driving down the field. He's standing on the sidelines, he looks down and shakes his head and says, 'How many times have I seen this?'"

The Super Bowl has seen numerous dramatic finishes in its first 51 incarnations, most of them preceded by a big play that set up the ending.

In Super Bowl V, Baltimore defeated Dallas, 16-13, on Jim O'Brien's 32-yard field goal with nine seconds remaining. Yet it was good fortune in the first half that even gave the Colts a chance at victory. Their first touchdown came on a 75-yard tipped pass completion from Johnny Unitas to tight end John Mackey – a throw that first went off intended receiver Eddie Hinton and then defender Mel Renfro before ending up in the arms of an alert Mackey. Prior to that, Baltimore had run nine plays and gained all of 12 yards.

Super Bowl XXV saw the Giants upend the Bills, 20-19, when Scott Norwood missed a 47-yard field goal attempt with just four seconds to play. However, the game's most important sequence came in the third quarter when the Giants drained more than nine minutes off the clock – keeping

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The Colts' offense was going nowhere in Super Bowl V until John Mackey reeled in a tipped pass that he turned into a 75-yard touchdown.

Ottis Anderson's touchdown run capped the Giants' nine-minute third-quarter drive that defined Super Bowl XXV.

Buffalo's explosive offense on the sideline – on a drive that ended with an Ottis Anderson touchdown run. And the biggest play of that drive … and maybe the game? Mark Ingram's 14-yard reception on a third-and-13 from the Bills 32-yard line, a play that saw him break free of five would-be tacklers before lunging for the first down.

Carolina had upset plans of its own in Super Bowl XXXVIII, and stood tied with the Patriots, 29-29, with 1:08 to play after QB Jake Delhomme connected with Ricky Proehl for a touchdown. But when John Kasay sent the ensuing kickoff out of bounds, it allowed New England to take possession at its 40-yard line, giving Brady the time and field position to march his team to victory. His nifty sideline throw to Deion Branch, the receiver's 10th and final catch of the day, allowed Vinatieri the opportunity to be a Super Bowl hero for the second time in three years.

Even when there's no disputing the game's biggest play, it may be easy to forget what made it possible. In Super Bowl XLII, Giants wide receiver David Tyree is well-remembered for the 32-yard circus catch against his helmet that kept the game-winning drive alive against the Patriots. But the catch is only half the story. Facing a fierce rush on that third-and-five play, Giants QB Eli Manning escaped the grasp of at least three Patriots – Richard Seymour, Adalius Thomas, and Jarvis Green – before regaining his footing and heaving the ball to Tyree.

NFL Films' Steve Sabol called it "the greatest play the Super Bowl has ever produced." It was also named "Play of the Decade (2000s)" by NFL Films.

Sometimes the same player makes the two biggest plays in a game. That was the case for Patriots defensive back Malcolm Butler in Super Bowl XLIX, who had a game-saving play just moments before, well, his game-saving play. The first came when the Seahawks' Jermaine Kearse – while sprawled on his back at the Patriots 6-yard line – somehow caught a pass from Russell Wilson and then got up to head for the end zone. An alert Butler recovered on the play and shoved the receiver out of bounds.

Two plays later, Butler stepped in front of would-be receiver Ricardo Lockette at the goal line for the "interception heard around the world," preserving New England's 28-24 victory. But if he hadn't smartly stayed with Kearse on that earlier play, the Seahawks would likely have scored … without enough time for even a magician like Brady to save the day.

It's just another example that in the Super Bowl, the razor's edge between winning and losing can cut both ways.

D. Orlando Ledbetter *serves as the Atlanta Falcons beat writer for* The Atlanta Journal-Constitution *and is a former president of the Pro Football Writers of America (2013-15).*

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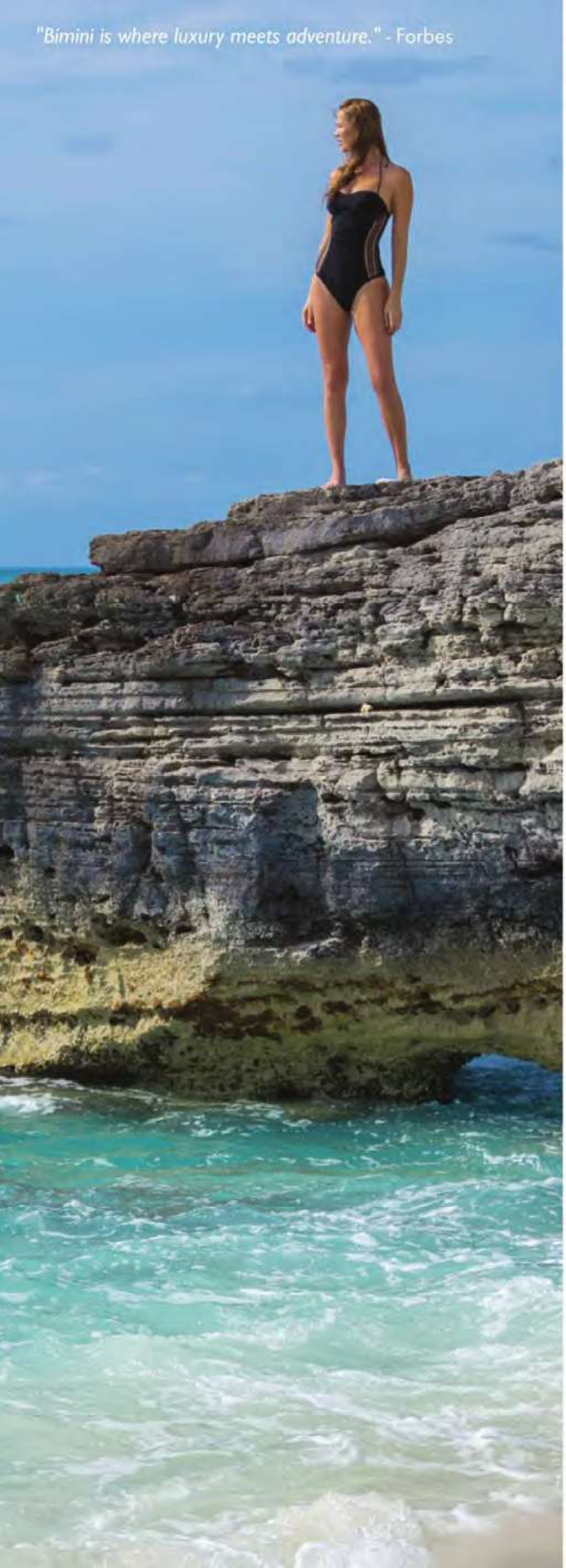

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JOURNEY OF TRIUMP

THEY'RE SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSMEN, lifelong football fans, and owners of the Minnesota Vikings, but Zygi and Mark Wilf's greatest hero actually is a heroine who never worked in the family real estate business or played a down of football in her life.

As second-generation Holocaust survivors, the 67-year-old Zygi and his 55-year-old brother Mark owe everything – literally – to their brave, resourceful grandmother Miriam Fisch.

"She really rescued the family," Mark says. "She had the strength and luck to do it. She lived a long life. She is one of the heroes of my life."

Miriam was the mother of Elizabeth "Suzie" Wilf. Suzie is the mother of Zygi and Mark. And while growing up in Poland in the early 1940s, she experienced the horror of having nowhere else to hide from the Germans. Aunts, uncles, cousins, a grandmother, friends from school all had been led away, never to be seen again. Time was running out.

"When the Germans came, the Jews were put in the ghetto, an encircled barrier," Suzie told the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* in 2015. "From time to time, the Germans would come in and do a roundup. My parents decided it eventually would happen to us."

In 1943, Suzie was a child living with her family in Lvov. Adolph Hitler's Nazi regime, which started World War II by invading Poland four years earlier, sent many of the Jews from the Lvov ghetto to the Belzec death camp about 55 miles away. More than 500,000 of the six million Jews killed during the Holocaust perished at Belzec.

However, Miriam, with the help of a local Jewish militiaman, obtained documents identifying her to the Gestapo as a Christian woman with two Christian children. But there were no papers for Suzie's father.

"We wound up working for a woman who owned a farm, so we were able to hide my father in the barn under the floor boards," Suzie said. "Nearly two years we spent on that farm. That's where we were when we were liberated after the war."

Seventy-three years later, Zygi is owner and chairman of the Vikings; Mark is owner and president; and their cousin Lenny is part owner and vice chairman. Now if that were the end of the story, it would be a wonderful tale. But there's much more.

The late Joe Wilf was Zygi and Mark's father. He was their childhood head start on a bountiful life, and their role model in business as well as philanthropy. And he and his brother Harry are the reasons there are Wilf Family Foundations that have donated more than $200 million to the Jewish community and to many human rights and philanthropic causes.

Joe and Harry also were Holocaust survivors from Poland. After the country was divided by Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939, the

Bruce Kluckhohn/AP Images

With the construction of U.S. Bank Stadium, Vikings owners Mark (left) and Zygi Wilf have ensured the team's long-term future in Minnesota and brought a second Super Bowl to the Twin Cities.

Russians removed the boys and their parents from their home in Jaroslaw and sent them to a Siberian labor camp (their sister, Bella, stayed behind and is believed to have perished in the Warsaw ghetto).

"My father and Zygi's father survived the war by sticking together," says Lenny Wilf, Harry's son. "I tell people my late father and my uncle didn't share a room; they shared a bed. They had nothing."

After the war, the Wilfs intended to return to life in Jaroslaw. But the 1946 pogroms – violent anti-Semitic outbreaks – caused them to instead head for Augsburg, Germany, in the American-occupied zone near Munich. That's where Joe and Suzie met. They applied for American citizenship, were married, and as they waited and hoped, Zygmunt (Zygi) was born on April 22, 1950.

Two months later, the Wilfs were on their way to America, having been sponsored by the Hebrew Immigration Aid Society and the Jewish community in Birmingham, Ala.

"There was no way we could stay in Europe," Suzie said. "Our dream was to come to America."

Eventually, Joe and Harry ended up together in Hillside, N.J., where they founded Garden Homes, a real estate development business now in its 63rd year.

"How did two brothers go from sharing a bed growing up to all their success?" Lenny asks. "Honestly, I just think they outworked everybody else. That's kind of been the methodology in the family over the years."

"BEING COMPETITIVE IN WHATEVER WE DO IS PART OF OUR DNA. ... WE WANT TO WIN CHAMPIONSHIPS."

—VIKINGS CO-OWNER ZYGI WILF

It wasn't long before the New York Giants were almost all that mattered to young Zygi and Lenny. Zygi played competitive tennis but was a backyard football enthusiast along with his cousin, who grew up next door.

"I'll make it simple," Lenny says with a laugh. "Zygi had great passion for football. But the talent was minimal."

In 1959, Joe and Harry bought Giants season tickets at old Yankee Stadium. They knew nothing about football, but Ralph Loveys, a business partner who had played at Middlebury (Vt.) College, suggested the game as a way for immigrant fathers to bond with and Americanize their sons.

"They had four seats in right field, and Zygi and I sat in the old bleachers," Lenny says. "My favorite memory as a kid was going to Giants games at 1 o'clock, taking the subway back to dinner, and then going to the 7 o'clock Rangers hockey games that night. For a kid, that's heaven."

Loveys had friends who were Giants players and, before long, the elder Wilfs began building them homes. Joe was even approached with opportunities to join groups to buy the old New York Titans and the Philadelphia Eagles, but he wasn't interested.

"The Giants in the '60s and '70s lost lots of games," Zygi says. "I would be very distraught about the way we lost games, but my father used to always go, 'Don't feel so bad. Think how the owner must feel.'

"Here I am now, and I know exactly how the owner feels.

"Being competitive in whatever we do is part of our DNA," he adds. "In the first few years as owner, I felt more like a kid in a candy shop. I said, 'Wow. All these guys who I dreamed of and now I'm on the field with them.' [Since then], there's the reality. All I can say is that as I get older, it gets harder to lose. We want to win championships."

While that pursuit continues, off the field the Wilfs have extended their philanthropy locally with efforts that include the $5 million Wilf Family Center at the University of Minnesota Masonic Children's Hospital. They also have been leaders in diversity hiring and promotion. Vikings Chief Operating Officer Kevin Warren is the NFL's first black COO and its highest-ranking black business executive.

In league circles, Zygi is a member of the investment committee. Mark sits on three committees – business ventures, stadium, and Super Bowl & major events – and Lenny is on the NFL Foundation committee.

Most important to Vikings fans, however, is the patience and perseverance they showed to build U.S. Bank Stadium, thus guaranteeing the franchise's future in Minnesota while delivering a second Super Bowl to the Twin Cities. The $1.1 billion facility was a public-private arrangement that saw the Wilfs first contribute $477 million, and then an additional $132 million for enhancements to the fan experience. The stadium agreement came at a time when the Vikings were among the franchises rumored to be candidates to move to Los Angeles.

"Would the Vikings have been on that list?" says NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell. "I don't know what would have happened. But my hat's off to the people of Minnesota that didn't allow that to happen. They stood up and said, 'We want the Vikings here,' and just as importantly, the Wilfs stood up long ago and said, 'We want to be here long into the future.'"

In March, the team's new state-of-the-art headquarters and practice facility, called Twin Cities Orthopedics Performance Center, will open in nearby Eagan. It's a 200-acre parcel that includes 40 acres for the team and the rest to be developed into residential, retail, restaurant, and hotel spaces over the next 10 to 15 years.

"First and foremost, we're going to give our players the best possible environment to succeed," Mark says. "The facility is going to provide much needed modernization and upgrades that set the pace within the NFL and are critical in recruiting and retaining future players."

As youngsters, Suzie and Joe first focused on survival and then the future. They didn't even share their stories of the Holocaust until Zygi and Mark were grown. Now Suzie has nine grandchildren and five great-grandchildren, and she is often asked to speak at her grandchildren's grade schools so that the Holocaust is never forgotten.

"It was not easy to go back to those times," she said. "We pushed away the memories of those life-threatening times and took to the good life of America. Americans should be more appreciative of America and be more tolerant. Even with all the things going on, it's still the best country in the world."

***Mark Craig** covers the Vikings and the NFL for the* Minneapolis Star Tribune. *He has covered football since 1991 and is a Pro Football Hall of Fame selector.*

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CHAMPIONS BY ANY NAME

SOME OF THE NFL'S GREATEST TEAMS ADOPTED MONIKERS THAT CAPTURED THE IMAGINATION AND HAVE KEPT THEIR LEGACIES ALIVE. ***BY MIKE GARAFOLO***

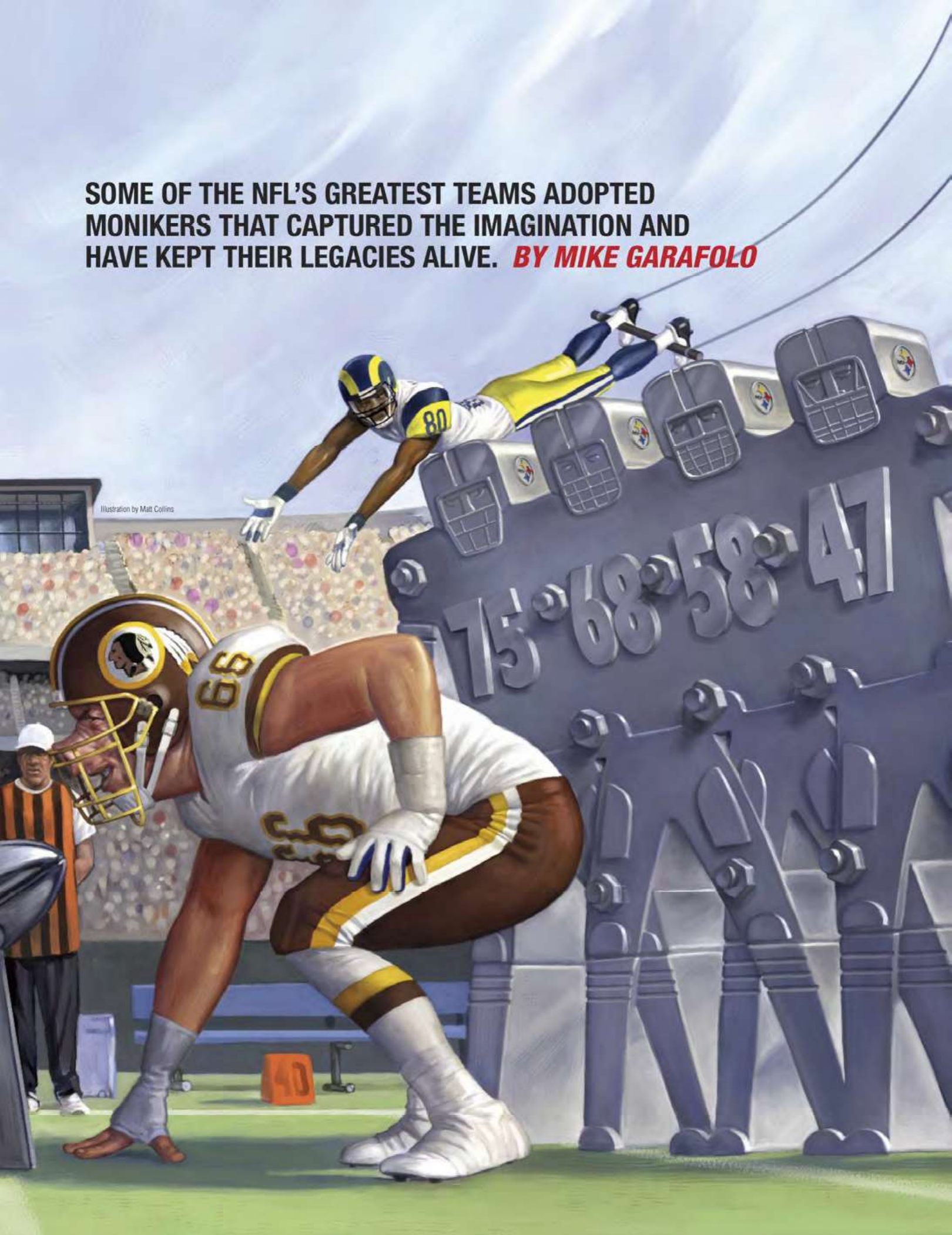

Illustration by Matt Collins

THERE'S OLD FOOTAGE of an interview NFL Films used recently. It's of a smiling Jerry Kramer as the longtime Green Bay Packers guard is explaining his decision to retire.

"There's a young [player] by the name of Alan Page. He's got a lot of desire, a lot of heart, a lot of speed," Kramer says. "Any time I consider coming out of retirement, I think of Alan Page. That makes retirement just a little bit easier."

One of only two defensive players to win the Associated Press' MVP Award and an eventual Hall of Famer, Page was the leader of the Minnesota Vikings' defensive line in the late 1960s and '70s – a group that included tackle Gary Larsen and ends Carl Eller and Jim Marshall.

They were the "Purple People Eaters."

It's one of the great nicknames in NFL history, and the only thing missing from the group's legacy is a title. They and their teammates made four appearances in the Super Bowl, only to lose each time.

This year, with Super Bowl LII being played at Minnesota's U.S. Bank Stadium – about 11 miles from the old Metropolitan Stadium, where the Purple People Eaters wreaked havoc on opposing offenses – it seems an appropriate time to salute the title-winning teams that featured some of the best nicknames in pro football history.

With apologies to the great ones that didn't make the cut (the Giants' "Big Blue Wrecking Crew," the Cowboys' "Triplets" and "Doomsday Defense," and the Bears' "Monsters of the Midway" among them), here are our top five Super Bowl winning team/group nicknames:

THE HOGS

Most nicknames come from the outside – fans or media who observe from afar – but during the Washington Redskins training camp in 1982, Joe Bugel slapped one on from the inside when he barked to his players it was time to get to work.

"Hey, you hogs," the Skins' offensive coordinator and line coach yelled, "let's go down to the bullpen and hit the sleds."

That's how Jeff Bostic remembers it. He also recalls Bugel bringing in "Hogs" T-Shirts for the group and telling the linemen they'd be fined $10 if they didn't wear them each Friday. And Bostic recalls with a laugh the pig snouts on fans and the dresses on the "Hogettes" in the stands later that season as the team marched toward the franchise's first Super Bowl title, a 27-17 win over the Dolphins in Super Bowl XVII.

BEST NICKNAMES TO MAKE THE SUPER BOWL BUT NOT WIN

CAROLINA CATS: The 2003 **Panthers** were known for their comebacks, but couldn't complete one more in a last-second loss to the Patriots in Super Bowl XXXVIII.

DIRTY BIRDS: Not enough dancing for **Falcons** running back Jamal Anderson in the Broncos' Super Bowl XXXIII win.

KILLER Bs: If not for the Hogs in Super Bowl XVII, the **Dolphins**, with a defense that had six starters whose names started with B, might have been champs.

ORANGE CRUSH: The **Broncos'** top-ranked run defense in 1977 gave up 143 yards to the Cowboys in a 27-10 Super Bowl XII loss.

PURPLE PEOPLE EATERS: "The fans, they never forgive you," former **Vikings** lineman Carl Eller told *Newsday* with a laugh in 2014. He was referring to the team's four Super Bowl defeats.

The nickname fit the grunt work the line (Bostic at center, Joe Jacoby and George Starke at tackle, and Russ Grimm and Mark May at guard) did to clear the way for "Honorary Hog" John Riggins, the running back whose 610 yards in four postseason games that year is still an NFL record.

"Riggins was a sledgehammer," Bostic says. "Perfect for what we did up front."

What they often did was run the Counter Trey, a play Redskins coach Joe Gibbs adapted from the counter plays the University of Nebraska was running at the college level. The Hogs' combination of size (Jacoby was the biggest, at 6-foot-7 and around 315 pounds) and athleticism ("When Mark Rypien became our quarterback, all of the linemen could outrun him," Bostic says) made the Counter Trey practically unstoppable.

"We would get in formations and you could hear the defense say, 'They're running the OT.' That's what they called it," Bostic says. "And we'd say, 'Yep. Here it comes. Stop it.' And they couldn't."

Bostic and Jacoby were starters on the offensive line for all three of the Redskins' Super Bowl titles. (Grimm was a backup on the '91 team.) Tackle Jim Lachey and guards Raleigh McKenzie and Mark Schlereth were other integral pieces over the years.

"We had longevity," Bostic says. "It's one thing if your little moniker is there and then, four years later, it's gone. We got that name in '82 and it stuck around until I retired in '93."

THE NO NAME DEFENSE

Tom Landry was trying to pay the Dolphins' defense a compliment. He truly was.

The legendary Cowboys coach said before Super Bowl VI he was concerned about Miami's group of linemen, linebackers, and defensive backs that had allowed the third-fewest points in the league in 1971. He just said he didn't know any of their names.

By the time that comment went from Landry's lips to the Dolphins' ears, it became a criticism of players who weren't exactly stars.

And thus, the "No Name Defense" was born.

One year later, still stung by the comment and by the Cowboys' 24-3 victory in that game, the Dolphins' defense was determined to show Landry and the NFL how good they could be. So they gave up a league-low 171 points, pitched three shutouts, and kept the Redskins out of the end zone in Super Bowl VII to complete a perfect 17-0 season.

"It was a badge of pride. Or really, a badge of incentive," defensive lineman Manny Fernandez recalls. "It was like, 'We'll show them what a bunch of no-names could do.'"

From Fernandez to linebacker Nick Buoniconti, and from defensive end Bob Stanfill to safety Jake Scott, the Dolphins' defense featured terrific players. They just didn't have many self-promoters.

"No big-mouths," Fernandez says. "We preferred to think of ourselves as a unit."

That unit, with Bill Arnsparger as its coordinator, led the league in scoring defense again in 1973 on the way to a second straight Super Bowl title. In fact, from the AFL-NFL merger in 1970 through 1975, Miami finished no lower than sixth in the NFL in that category. Another sign of the defense's prowess is that it took Hall of Fame running back O.J. Simpson nine games against the Dolphins to finally crack 100 rushing yards, and that was in a 17-0 Bills loss, with most of Simpson's total coming in the second half against a prevent defense.

"The fabled Electric Company (the nickname for the Buffalo Bills'

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offensive line) couldn't do anything against a bunch of no-names," Fernandez says. "I remember all of our guys' names, though."

THE STEEL CURTAIN

In 1971, a 14-year-old Pittsburgh resident named Greg Kronz scrambled down the steps to grab breakfast before heading to school. That's when he heard the announcement from Myron Cope on WTAE radio that the station was holding a contest to give the Steelers' defense a nickname.

Within seconds, Kronz looked at his mother and spouted out one of the most legendary monikers in sports history.

"Steel Curtain," he said, a cross between the city's steel industry and the Iron Curtain that separated Europe for decades during the Cold War. "I'm going to send it in and win the contest."

To Kronz went the glory (and a four-day vacation to Miami he passed off to his parents as a second honeymoon), though the truth is 16 other people sent in the same suggestion. But since he won the drawing to break the tie, Kronz to this day receives the recognition as the originator.

"I had a friend this past year who didn't know and dug it up in an old clipping and asked, 'Is this you?'" says Rev. Kronz, now in his 26th year as Pastor/Rector of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Hilton Head, S.C. "So it still comes up periodically."

What makes the nickname so unique is it has spanned generations of Steelers football. While it was first given to a defensive front that included the likes of Jack Ham, Mean Joe Greene, and L.C. Greenwood, it's also been applied to defenses of later decades, such as the units of the 1990s that featured Kevin Greene and Levon Kirkland, and more recent teams that have boasted James Harrison, Troy Polamalu, and LaMarr Woodley. Six Super Bowl titles and consistently tenacious defense in a town with a proud blue-collar history has allowed the nickname to remain relevant.

Rev. Kronz, who often plays in the Pro-Am at the PGA's RBC Heritage golf tournament in Hilton Head, has had the chance to share his story with some prominent NFL figures, including the late Dan Rooney.

"Jim Nantz told me, 'You realize it's one of the most enduring names in sports,'" Rev. Kronz says, referring to CBS' top NFL play-by-play announcer. "I never thought about it until he said that. It really is."

THE LEGION OF BOOM

Richard Sherman started 10 games in 2011 and had established himself as one of the Seahawks' cornerstone players by the early part of the following season, yet it wasn't until Oct. 14, 2012, when he and his defensive teammates announced their presence nationally.

Sherman and safety Earl Thomas each intercepted Tom Brady as Seattle stunned the Patriots, 24-23, and following the game, Sherman posted a picture showing him confronting the New England quarterback with the now-infamous caption, "U Mad Bro?"

A budding contender, the Seahawks boasted a balanced roster with dynamic quarterback Russell Wilson, running back Marshawn Lynch, and an arsenal of pass rushers and tacklers on their defensive front seven.

But that young, brash secondary …

"We bring the boom," hard-hitting safety Kam Chancellor said in a radio interview in 2012.

Shortly thereafter, fans dubbed the defensive backs the "Legion of Boom," and the group's reputation soared along with its play, evidenced by Chancellor's nine tackles, one interception, and two passes defensed in the team's 43-8 win over the Broncos in Super Bowl XLVIII. A year later, the Seahawks fashioned the league's best pass defense.

It was during that 2014 season, after the team fell to 6-4, when Chancellor gave a speech using the initials "L.O.B." to implore the team to "love our brothers." The speech worked. Seattle won eight straight on its way to a second consecutive Super Bowl appearance.

"It carries on beyond football," Thomas said recently of L.O.B.'s new meaning. "It started in the [defensive backs'] room and then spread throughout the team with Kam emphasizing it and the boys really starting to believe it. It's taken on more meaning than anything on the field."

THE GREATEST SHOW ON TURF

There were times during the 1998 season when St. Louis Rams coach Dick Vermeil would walk off the field after a practice muttering to himself about how the scout-team QB had completed passes all over the place.

"Either our defense is horse—," Vermeil thought, "or this kid can play."

In 1999, after starting quarterback Trent Green suffered a season-ending knee injury, that kid got a chance. And, yes, he could play.

Kurt Warner threw 14 touchdowns in his first four games, including five against the 49ers to snap the Rams' 17-game losing streak against their NFC West rivals. Warner, who finally had his shot in the NFL after stints in the Arena Football League and NFL Europe, finished the season with 4,353 passing yards and 41 touchdowns.

With an arsenal that included running back Marshall Faulk and wide receivers Isaac Bruce, Torry Holt, and Az-Zahir Hakim, Warner led an offense that took the NFL by storm.

"The team had tremendous speed," Vermeil recalls. "Any receiver could score from anywhere."

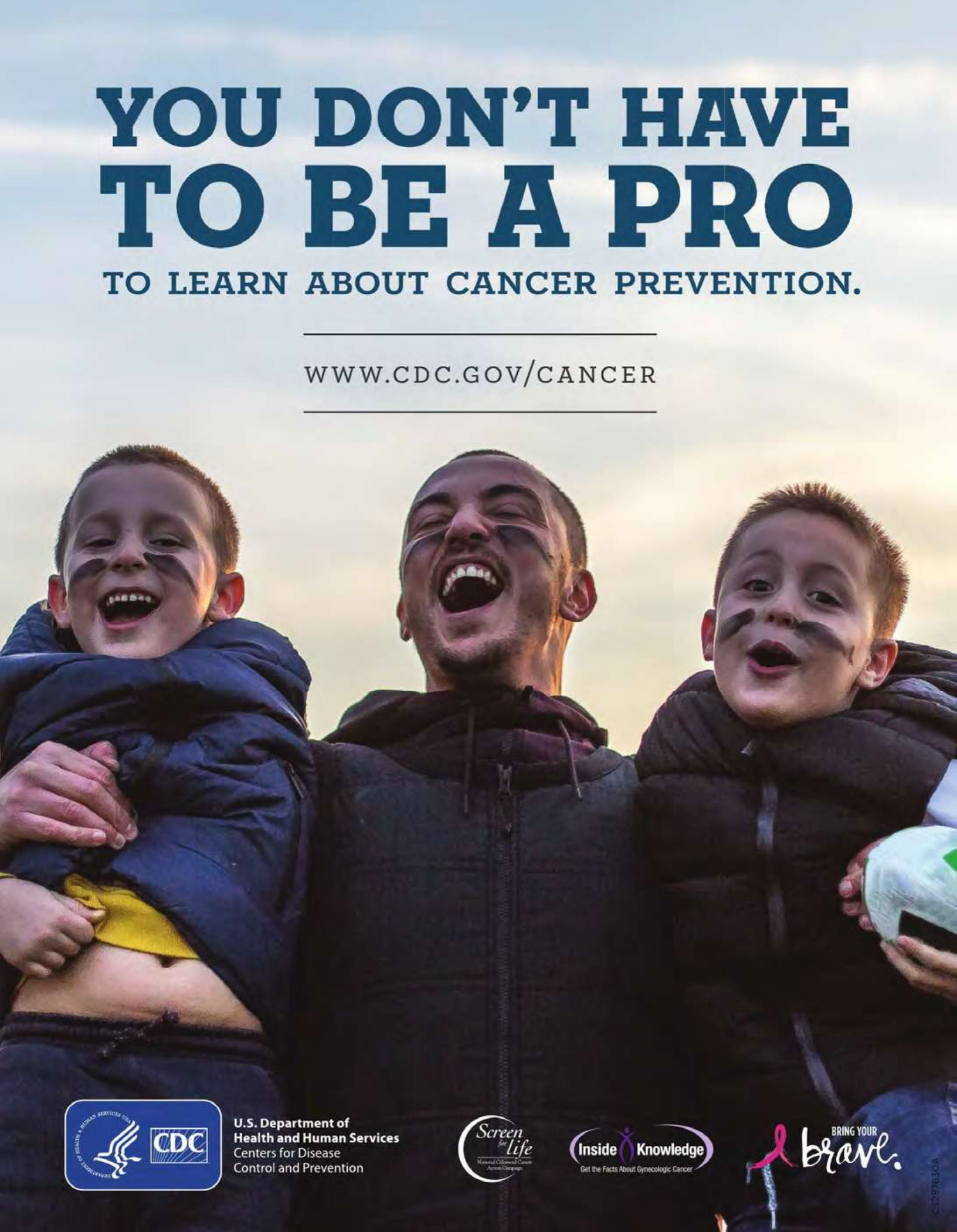
It wasn't until the following year that a 57-point outburst against the Chargers led ESPN's Chris Berman to say the team was "The Greatest Show on Earth" because of their ability to score quickly and often. At some point (no one quite recalls when), the nickname was tweaked to "The Greatest Show on Turf," a reference to how fast the offense was when they played at home in the Trans World Dome.

Vermeil, however, is quick to note that the moniker also applied to the team's defense (which scored eight touchdowns in 1999) and special teams (three TDs). For even with all of those points the offense tallied, it took a tackle by linebacker Mike Jones of Titans receiver Kevin Dyson at the 1-yard line to wrap up the Rams' Super Bowl XXXIV victory.

Without that speedy defense, The Greatest Show on Turf may have ended up like the Purple People Eaters and other monikered contenders that came close but didn't bring home the Lombardi Trophy.

"JIM NANTZ TOLD ME, 'YOU REALIZE [THE STEEL CURTAIN] IS ONE OF THE MOST ENDURING NAMES IN SPORTS.' I NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT IT UNTIL HE SAID THAT." – REV. GREG KRONZ, ORIGINATOR OF THE STEELERS' DEFENSIVE NICKNAME

Mike Garafolo covers the NFL for NFL Network and NFL.com after previously working for FOX Sports, USA TODAY *Sports, and* The Newark Star-Ledger.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BUSTING THROUGH

IT WAS 20 YEARS AGO WHEN THE BRONCOS SNAPPED THE NFC'S SUPER BOWL RUN AND REDIRECTED THE FRANCHISE'S FORTUNES.

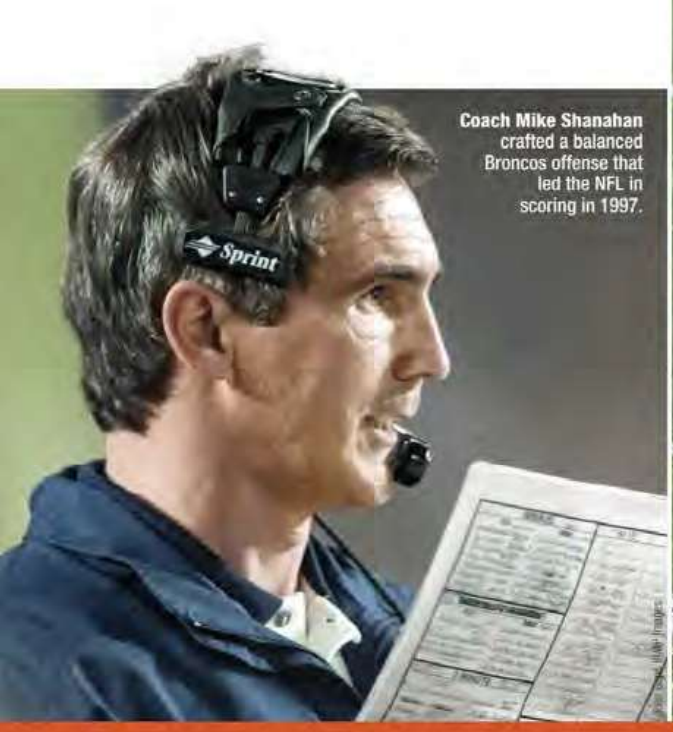
BY JIM SACCOMANO

It's a much different history now.

The Denver Broncos are one of nine NFL teams to have won three or more Super Bowls – including triumphs that capped the careers of quarterback legends John Elway and Peyton Manning – but it was an upset victory in Super Bowl XXXII 20 years ago that first elevated them to championship status. In doing so, they vanquished a 13-year NFC curse along with every demon in franchise history.

Despite a migraine that sidelined him for part of the game, the Broncos' Terrell Davis was voted Super Bowl XXXII MVP after rushing for 157 yards and scoring three touchdowns, including the game-winner in the closing minutes.

Walter Iooss Jr./Getty Images



Coach Mike Shanahan crafted a balanced Broncos offense that led the NFL in scoring in 1997.

Steve Atwater (27) sacks Packers QB Brett Favre and forces a fumble that the Broncos would recover, leading to a Denver field goal.

Going into that game against the defending champion Green Bay Packers, Denver was an ugly 0-4 in the Super Bowl. Three of those losses – setbacks to the Giants, Redskins, and 49ers – came by a combined 96 points during the NFC's streak of dominance that began in Super Bowl XIX. Many Broncos fans were wary of the embarrassment that might result from another lopsided defeat.

But this was a decidedly different Broncos team – no longer a "one man gang" heavily reliant on Elway's big right arm. Coach Mike Shanahan, hired in 1995 after being the offensive coordinator for the Super Bowl XXIX champion 49ers, took several steps to restructure the squad around a more balanced attack.

He smartly snapped up Terrell Davis in the sixth round of the 1995 NFL Draft, and the running back promptly delivered a series of 1,000-yard rushing seasons, including 1,750 yards and 15 touchdowns in 1997. Davis' presence, in turn, added to the effectiveness of tight end Shannon Sharpe, whose 15.4 yards per reception in 1997 was the best of his 14-year career. And Elway could drop back to pass with confidence, knowing he had one of the game's great offensive linemen – left tackle Gary Zimmerman – protecting his blind side.

The result? A league-leading 472 points scored.

Yet Denver's defense also was much improved. The '97 Broncos allowed just 287 points, tied for second-fewest in the AFC and a drop of more than 100 points from what they surrendered in 1994, the year before Shanahan arrived.

The Super Bowl was the goal from day one of training camp, so the Broncos were where they expected to be, albeit with a bit of a detour. They jumped out of the blocks 9-1, before stumbling a bit down the stretch and allowing the Chiefs to slip past them for the AFC West title.

That made their playoff path a bit more formidable, but after a home Wild Card win over Jacksonville, they took road decisions against Kansas City and Pittsburgh to earn the trip to Super Bowl XXXII. The Broncos headed to San Diego's Qualcomm Stadium with confidence and some familiarity, having beaten the Chargers there in Week 14.

As starting strong safety Tyrone Braxton explains, "For us, it was all about the journey. We won the Divisional Playoff game at Kansas City and the AFC Championship Game at Pittsburgh, so facing Green Bay on an AFC West neutral field that we played on every year did not seem like as large a problem. We looked forward to it."

Shanahan pointed out, "Lots of our fans always travel to San Diego. And this is the Super Bowl, so half the crowd will (already) be cheering for us."

Following Jewel's singing of the national anthem, the offenses shined as Super Bowl XXXII became the first in which each team scored a touchdown on its opening possession. The Packers broke through on Brett Favre's 22-yard pass to Antonio Freeman, and the Broncos answered back by driving 58 yards in 10 plays, scoring on a one-yard Davis run.

SUPER BOWL XXXII BECAME THE FIRST IN WHICH EACH TEAM SCORED A TD ON ITS OPENING POSSESSION.

Denver then turned two Packers turnovers into 10 points and a 17-7 lead. The first opportunity was created when Braxton intercepted a Favre pass; eight plays later, Elway rushed around right end for a touchdown. Broncos free safety Steve Atwater, who had a brilliant game, sacked Favre on Green Bay's next possession, forcing a fumble that defensive end Neil Smith recovered. Four plays later, Jason Elam converted a 51-yard field goal, still the second-longest in Super Bowl history.

While a 10-point lead should be comforting, Denver fans didn't have to dig too deep to recall a similar situation gone wrong. In Super Bowl XXII, the Broncos led Washington, 10-0, in the second quarter only to see the Redskins suddenly explode for 35 points before halftime. Now another

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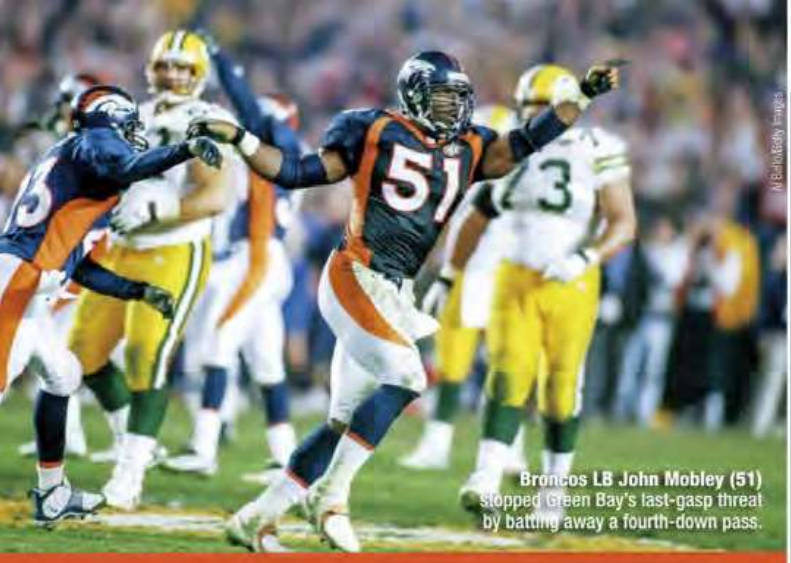

Broncos LB John Mobley (51) stopped Green Bay's last-gasp threat by batting away a fourth-down pass.

QB John Elway celebrates Denver's Super Bowl XXXII triumph by hoisting the Lombardi Trophy, the first in franchise history.

critical sequence began to unfold … and it did not go in Denver's favor.

Davis, who suffered from exertional migraines throughout his career, had what is medically described as the onset aura. Symptoms include difficulty seeing and a headache, and the only solution was to put Davis alone in a dark room and apply appropriate migraine medicines. The Broncos followed that procedure, and as head athletic trainer Steve Antonopulos later said, "Thank God for the long halftime."

The symptoms passed and Davis, a San Diego native, returned to the field with a vengeance. His team needed every bit of it. The Packers had scored a touchdown just before the half and tied things up early in the third quarter on Ryan Longwell's 27-yard field goal.

It remained tied late in the quarter when Elway directed the Broncos downfield. That's when another critical sequence unfolded, this one going the way of the AFC champs. With his team inside the Green Bay 10, Elway scrambled and was hit, spinning airborne in a circle parallel to the ground – a play known in team lore as "the helicopter play."

The stadium erupted when Elway held onto the ball, made the first down, and stood up. From that point on, the already raucous crowd seemed to be firmly on the Broncos' side. Davis, on his way to becoming the first player to win Super Bowl Most Valuable Player honors in his hometown, finished off the drive with another one-yard score.

Following an Elway interception, Green Bay moved 85 yards in just four plays to tie the game, 24-24, early in the fourth quarter. The score was still knotted when the Broncos set up shop at the Packers 49-yard line with 3:27 to play. Elway, who would retire as pro football's leader in game-winning fourth-quarter drives, was about to pen a new Super Bowl screenplay for Denver fans to enjoy.

Davis capped the five-play march by scoring again from one yard out, putting his team in front while becoming the first player to rush for three touchdowns in a Super Bowl. It was an exclamation point for one of the greatest postseasons ever for a running back – with totals of 581 rushing yards and eight touchdowns, the former second to only John Riggins for a single postseason and the later a record that still stands.

Denver's defense, which had been stellar all day against Favre, stopped him a final time when linebacker John Mobley batted down a fourth-down pass to secure the win. All that was left was every coach's favorite play: victory formation.

"We were very confident going in, and there was an unbelievable feeling of satisfaction to bringing that title to our great organization, fans, and to owner Pat Bowlen," Elway says. "That win showed the resilience and determination of our entire team."

Denver ran the ball so well – 179 yards in total – that it not only controlled the game offensively, but limited the Packers' ability to use their extensive blitz packages. After the game, Shanahan told the media, "We won it with the running game, and that is most pleasing."

The Broncos became the third non-division winner to prevail in the Super Bowl (joining Kansas City in Super Bowl IV and Oakland in Super Bowl XV), while Elway, Davis, Sharpe, and Zimmerman added a key entry to their Hall of Fame résumés.

Franchise success has continued nearly nonstop ever since. The Broncos flirted with a perfect season in 1998 en route to their second straight Super Bowl crown, and with Elway now perched above the field as the team's President of Football Operations/General Manager, they've become perennial championship contenders, adding their third Super Bowl title two years ago when they beat the Panthers.

But as defining moments in Denver Broncos history go, none can match Super Bowl XXXII, a victory forever cherished and first celebrated 20 years ago this week.

Jim Saccomano was the vice president of public relations for the Denver Broncos and spent 36 years coordinating team media relations. He remains a consultant and is the team historian.

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FROM A WORLDWIDE FAN BASE TO A GROWING NUMBER OF FOREIGN-BORN PLAYERS, THE NFL'S INTERNATIONAL INVESTMENT IS PRODUCING BIG RETURNS.

BY NEIL REYNOLDS

Global Dividends

When it comes to the global growth of the NFL, the league continues to make huge and historic strides.

There were four sold-out regular season games in London this season and another in Mexico City. Yet success is no longer limited to record-setting attendance figures or positive television ratings on channels such as the BBC and Sky Sports.

That's because there's another figure that's also growing: the number of international players making their mark across the league.

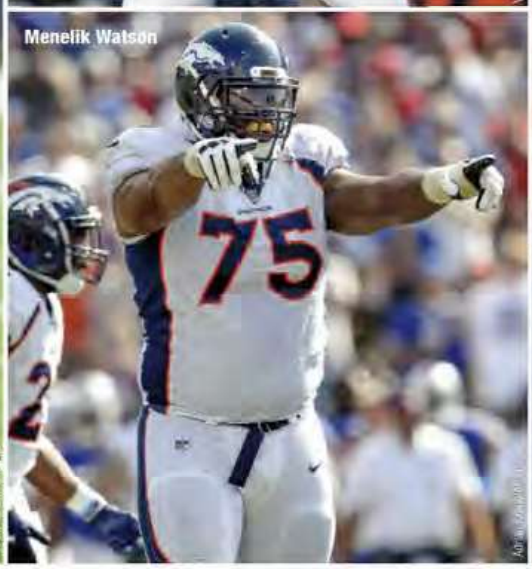
This past NFL preseason saw 10 British players on training camp rosters, including two who were taken in the 2017 draft: Oakland Raiders safety Obi Melifonwu and Baltimore Ravens offensive lineman Jermaine Eluemunor.

Established European players, including Philadelphia Eagles running back Jay Ajayi and Denver Broncos offensive tackle Menelik Watson, have been carving out a name for themselves for several years. But now a new crop is joining them, thanks to the launch of the NFL's International Player Pathway Program.

Fans of all ages have embraced the NFL's London Series. The league played a record four games there during the 2017 season.

Obi Melifonwu

Jermaine Eluemunor


Menelik Watson

Jay Ajayi

Four European players – three from the UK and one from Germany – were assigned to NFC South practice squads this season. They couldn't be promoted or cut from their team, but were afforded much-needed time to take their respective games to the next level.

NFL Executive Vice President International & Events Mark Waller explains: "What we're trying to do is create a safe haven where this talent can go and get the nurturing they need before they're put into that pressure cooker test of life in the NFL.

"Our goal is that we get to a place where all 32 teams have an international player exemption. And then our ultimate goal is that there is no safe haven, because the international players will be good enough that they won't need it. We want the international talent in the NFL to eventually rival what you get in worldwide sports like soccer and basketball."

The three Brits in the Player Pathway Program come from diverse backgrounds.

New Orleans Saints defensive end Alex Jenkins has gone from supermarket worker to the NFL. After beginning his career as an amateur player with the Bristol Aztecs and the Filton Pride, Jenkins went on to star at the University of the Incarnate Word in Texas before joining the Player Pathway Program.

"Five years ago, I was bagging groceries and activating people's gas pumps," Jenkins reveals. "I've always had that ambition and psychotic drive to do something great – that's why I chased my NFL dream. I wanted to be a success story."

Carolina Panthers defensive end Efe Obada never played college football but landed an NFL contract with the Dallas Cowboys in 2015 after playing just five games as an amateur with the London Warriors.

With experience in Dallas and Kansas City, the former warehouse worker is growing as an NFL defender, explaining, "When I first entered the league, I was getting distracted by everything and didn't really know the rules or where I fit in. But now I know my strengths and weaknesses and I'm a lot more comfortable."

Atlanta Falcons tight end Alex Gray was a rising English rugby star before he decided to make the switch to football this year.

"I've not come here just to give it a go – I'm committed to this," Gray says. "I had represented my country at every level and I was looking for that next challenge. I'm definitely enjoying this."

Jenkins feels he and his fellow Brits can pave the way for an ever-increasing number of international players in the NFL.

"We can open the doors for more to come after us," Jenkins insists. "That will give the NFL more of an incentive to look into these talent pools that haven't really been tapped into yet. There is so much international talent that hasn't been harnessed."

Ravens offensive lineman Eluemunor was drawn to football by watching the first NFL regular-season game in London on television in 2007.

Captivated by that rainy clash between the Miami Dolphins and New York Giants at Wembley Stadium, Eluemunor's path took him from the London Blitz amateur team to junior college in the United States and onto the larger stage of Texas A&M before being chosen in the fifth round of the 2017 NFL Draft.

"I was just looking for an Arsenal (British Premier League) game on TV, and when I saw the green and white of the Dolphins and the blue Giants helmets under the bright lights, I was really intrigued about what was going on," Eluemunor recalls. "I just fell in love with the game.

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Patriots fans helped pack Azteca Stadium in Mexico City in November. The NFL announced a three-year extension to play games in Mexico that will run through 2021.

Mark Waller

"I now have all these teenagers in the UK asking me for advice, and I want to show people that you can achieve anything if you just put your mind to it. I wanted to do whatever it took to get to the NFL – and my hard work paid off."

Waller adds: "Jermaine's story shows there is a legacy we're creating. That's the beauty of what we do in sport – people fall in love with it, they want to be part of it, and they make it happen. Jermaine did that as an athlete, but you can also do that as a fan."

And the fans keep coming to the games in London by the thousands, prompting further talk of a potential franchise there as early as 2022.

Longtime *Sports Illustrated* writer (and MMQB.si.com managing editor) Peter King visited the UK during the past offseason, appearing at a host of fan-forum events. After a whirlwind four-day tour of the country, King left with some pretty strong opinions.

"My trip to the UK was a revelation," the veteran journalist reported. "I'm totally taken with how enthusiastic people there are about football. There are a bunch of football savants over there.

"I think a London franchise is inevitable because you have so many influential owners who want it to happen. People see that London is ready. I think the NFL will figure out a way to do it and it will happen in five or six years. By 2022 or 2023, I think there will be a team in London."

"It makes sense for London to have a franchise," adds Minnesota Vikings tight end Kyle Rudolph, who played against the Browns at Twickenham Stadium this season. "The fans are hungry and they will support the team. [The NFL] had four games in London this year – that's half a season. Just make that eight games and we can have a team."

Los Angeles Rams punter Johnny Hekker has played in London three times and stresses, "I think there is enough fan support for a franchise. I'm sure if there were a London franchise, there would be a lot of pride in that team."

Waller has publicly confirmed the 2022 timeframe and adds, "Our league is run by its owners, and our owners decide where they want their teams to play. If an owner was to decide that he or she wanted to bring their team to the UK, our job is to make sure it's ready.

"I'm confident there will be a time in the foreseeable future when an owner will decide that, and we can say that we have two or three great venues where you can play (the NFL begins a 10-year partnership with Tottenham Hotspur F.C. in 2018), we have an amazing fan base, and it is doable.

"It's been 10 years and there were a lot of people who said it would be a flash in the pan that would last one or two seasons. It's definitely not been that. There is a permanence and progress that has been made in the UK. We're an established part of the British sporting calendar."

Mexico also remains an integral part of the NFL's international strategy, even if it doesn't mirror the exact pattern seen in London.

Waller explains: "I would like to think that Mexico will follow the trajectory of the UK in that we will be there every year. But I'm not sure we will need to do the same progression of games because we have a massive fan base (there) already."

As the NFL continues to race ahead with growing the game in the United Kingdom and serving that rabid and passionate fan base in Mexico, other markets are constantly being assessed.

"Success in one market gives us the confidence to look at the next one. In my mind, we should look at the world and decide where are the likely footprints where we can create a real presence," Waller says.

"We have huge fan growth in Brazil and that's a great sporting country," he adds. "In Europe, I definitely feel we need to be more visible and present in Germany. And when you get to Asia, you think of China and you will see us do more there in the next couple of years. We have a nice presence in Japan and we've always got a lot of interest in Australia.

"If you look at those markets, I think they give us great global representation – significant presence in the Americas, Europe, and Asia. That's a good footprint for us to have."

***Neil Reynolds** presents NFL coverage on Sky Sports TV in the United Kingdom and is the host of the Inside the Huddle podcast. He has written for NFL.com, the Pro Football Hall of Fame, and a host of publications in the U.S. and U.K.*

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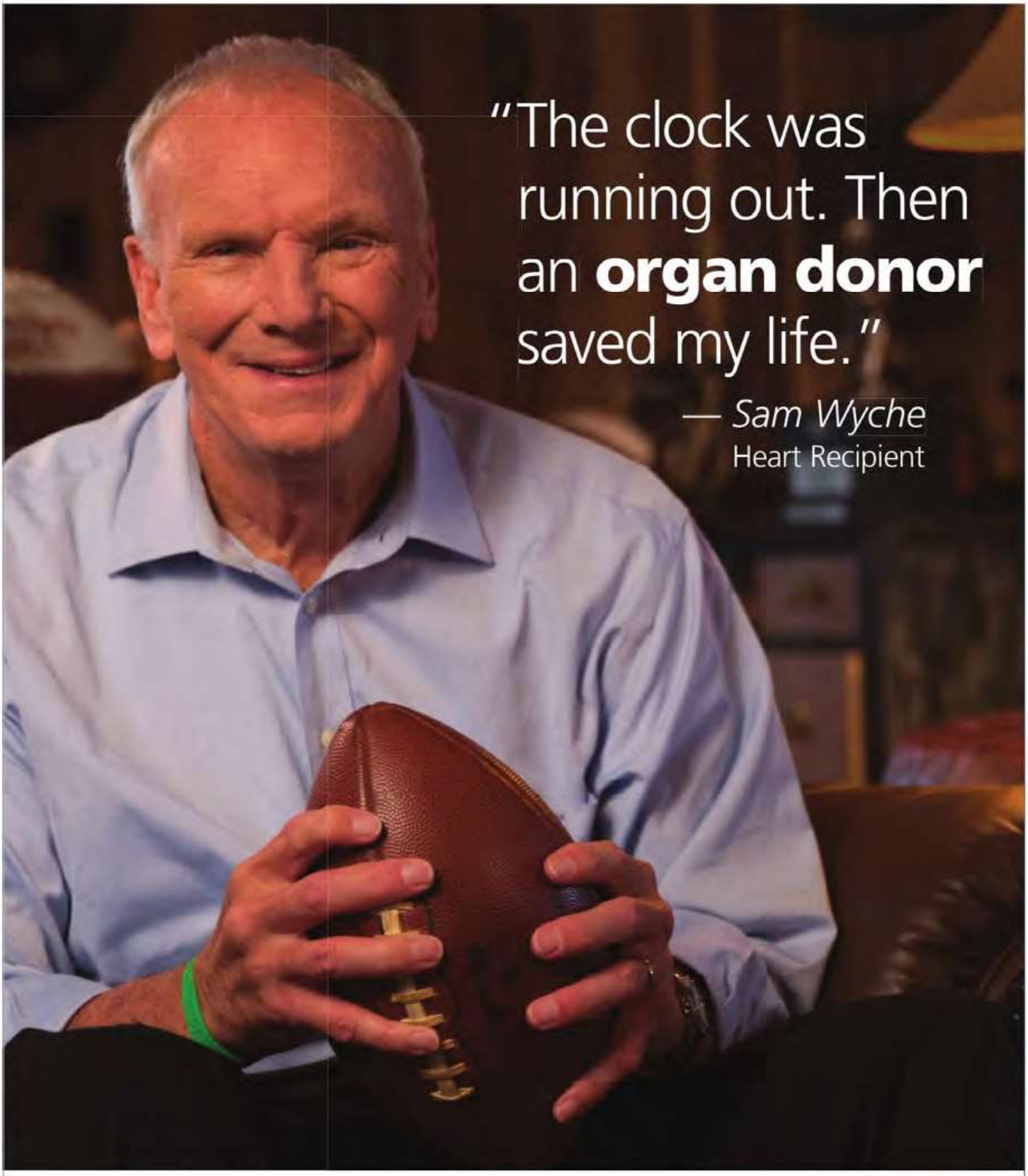

I've been a head coach and a quarterback in the NFL. And now, I'm thankful to say I'm also a heart recipient. My doctors had given me less than a week to live. On the last day I was supposed to be on this planet, I received a heart transplant from an organ donor. But so many people are still waiting — like I was — for the gift of life. You can be a game changer. Join more than 138 million registered organ, eye, and tissue donors. **Sign up online. Go to organdonor.gov.**

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DISSECTING the DYNASTIES

OF ALL THE GREAT TEAMS OF THE SUPER BOWL ERA, THE 49ERS AND THE PATRIOTS HAVE SET A STANDARD OF EXTENDED EXCELLENCE THAT'S UNMATCHED. ***BY CHAREAN WILLIAMS***

Walter Iooss Jr./Getty Images

Al Bello/Getty Images

Robert Kraft has no daily reminders of his Patriots' five Super Bowl championships. The team owner doesn't wear his rings, and he doesn't spend time staring at the Lombardi trophies. He has his reasons.

"I'm always looking to the future," Kraft says. "That's history. We take people in to see [the trophies], but you get seduced when you're privileged to win, because you really get addicted. After my family, there's nothing more important to me than winning football games, and when you're privileged to win, and you get that feeling, it's really seductive. I'll tell you: Losing really is for the birds."

With multiple Super Bowl titles and MVP awards, the 49ers' Joe Montana (opposite page) and the Patriots' Tom Brady hold a special place in the game's history.

The Patriots have won, and won a lot, since Kraft bought the team in 1994. In fact, only one team can challenge New England as the NFL's preeminent – and longest-lasting – dynasty of the Super Bowl era.

It's not the Steelers, who laid claim to the "Team of the 1970s" with four titles in six years and have added two more since. Nor is it the Cowboys, who first rose to prominence in the '70s as "America's Team" and then won three Super Bowls in four years in the 1990s. That "other" team is the 49ers, who enjoyed a two-decade winning spree in the 1980s and '90s that rivals the Patriots' current run of success.

"It's almost unbelievable," former 49ers owner Eddie DeBartolo says. "You can talk about the Patriots, the Cowboys, and the Steelers obviously, and the Packers fit into the conversation. I'm very proud that we were able to keep our players together and keep winning."

The 49ers and Patriots both have five Super Bowl titles. And the championships are like their kids: DeBartolo and Kraft can't pick a favorite. A title is a title is a title … is a title is a title.

"A lot of guys can't even get to one Super Bowl," says Ty Law, a cornerback for the Patriots from 1995-2004. "Then there's Dan Marino, who goes in his second year. How do you not go back in 15 years? You just know you're going back, and it doesn't happen. Everybody's goal is to get to the Super Bowl, but it's more realistic in some places than others."

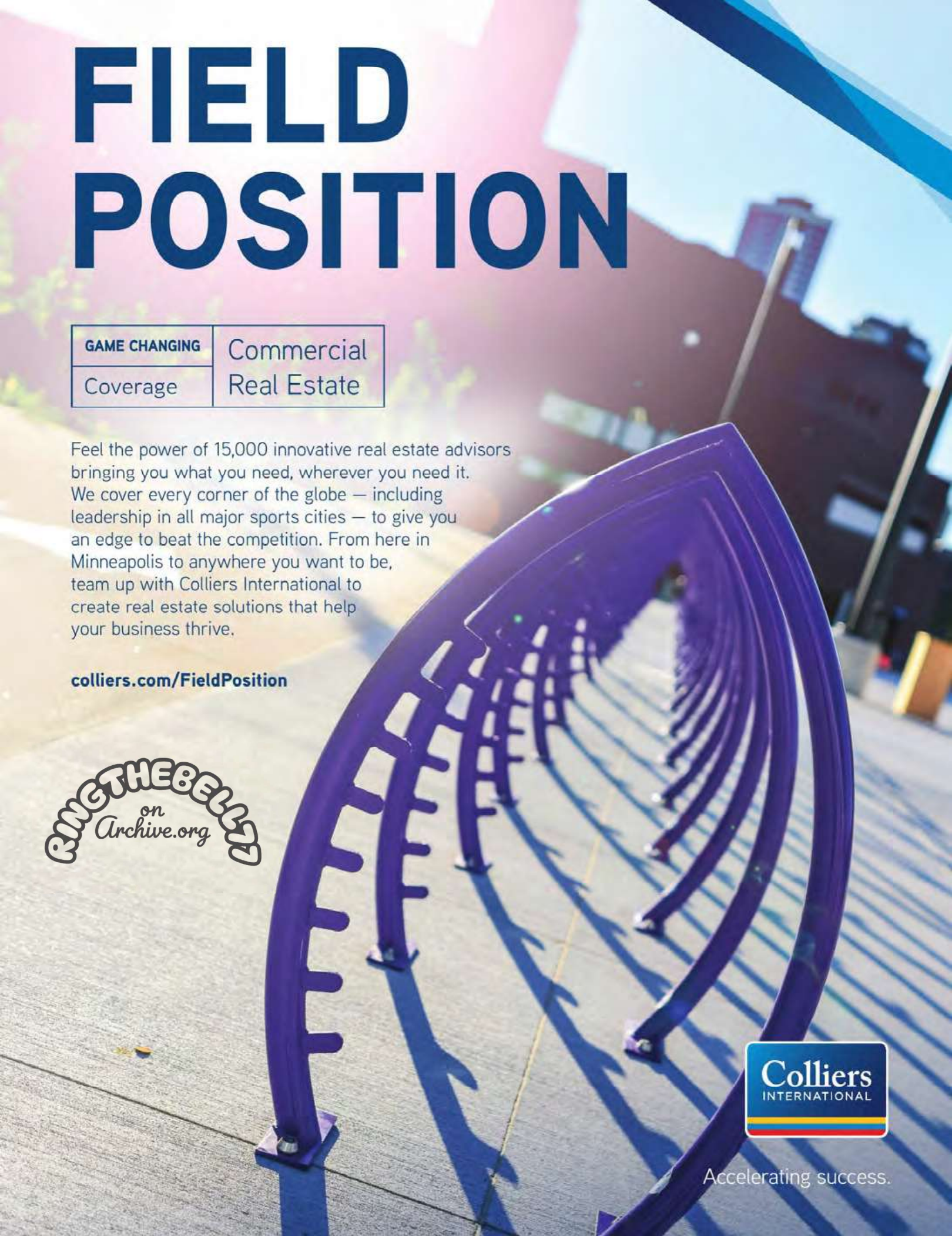
The 49ers were contenders for 18 consecutive seasons, reaching the playoffs 16 times. Over that time, they produced 17 double-digit win seasons and had only one season with a losing record. In the playoffs, the 49ers were 22-11, with a perfect 5-0 Super Bowl record and 10 trips to the NFC Championship Game.

The Patriots haven't posted a losing record since 2000 and, including 2017, have reached double-digit wins in 16 of the past 17 seasons. They've missed the playoffs just twice since 2001 and entered this year with a 25-9 postseason record over that span, with five Super Bowl titles and 11 appearances in the AFC Championship Game.

DeBartolo's 49ers and Kraft's Patriots can't lose for winning. What is their secret to success? The two teams share three things: An owner committed to winning; a mastermind coach; and a Hall of Fame quarterback. (The 49ers also had a second talented coach and a second Hall of Fame quarterback.)

But it was more than just an owner, a coach, and a quarterback. Otherwise, Marino, a Hall of Fame quarterback who spent 17 seasons in Miami, would have at least one Super Bowl title with Hall of Fame coach Don Shula.

"For a dynasty to be formed and maintained, you absolutely need the right coach," says Carmen Policy, who joined the 49ers in 1983 as vice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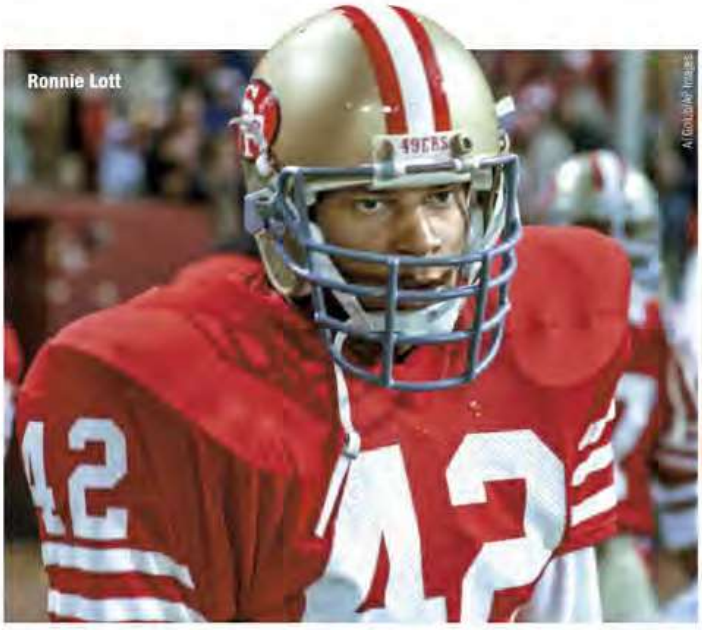

Ronnie Lott

Tedy Bruschi

president and counsel and became team president and CEO in 1991. "Perhaps you don't necessarily need the right genius coach to win a Super Bowl. But to really put together a dynasty, as I understand the word to be, I think you need the right coach, the right quarterback, and the right owner.

"You look at some of these organizations that seem headed in the right direction, but if they don't have the right direction from the top, it kind of falls apart. It can't stay together. Stuff happens. Things go wrong within the building. The whole structure becomes subject to these earthquakes and aftershocks that don't seem to be managed. There may be one trophy in the case, but then all of a sudden, it's hard to make it to the playoffs."

DeBartolo was 30 years old in 1977 when he bought the 49ers for $16 million. The night he shook hands to buy the team from the Morabito family, DeBartolo invited Policy, his good friend and lawyer, over to a Youngstown, Ohio, bar for a toast. When he told him the news, Policy thought he was crazy.

DYNASTY VS. DYNASTY

SAN FRANCISCO 49ers (1981-1994)		NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS (2001-2016)
5	SUPER BOWL APPEARANCES	7
5 (XVI, XIX, XXIII, XXIV, XXIX)	SUPER BOWL TITLES	5 (XXXVI, XXXVIII, XXXIX, XLIX, LI)
9 in 14 years	CONFERENCE TITLE GAMES	11 in 16 years
19-7 (.731)	PLAYOFF RECORD	25-9 (.735)
11	DIVISION TITLES	14
159-56-1 (.738)	REGULAR SEASON RECORD	196-60 (.766)
39	ALL-PRO SELECTIONS	53
82	PRO BOWL SELECTIONS	85

"He said, 'I just bought a football team,'" Policy remembers. "I said, 'Eddie, I didn't know the Cleveland Browns were for sale.' He answered, 'I didn't buy the Cleveland Browns. I bought the San Francisco 49ers.'

"I asked him, 'Why would you buy the 49ers? That's halfway across the world.' He said, 'Because they were for sale.'"

There were some rough times at the start. DeBartolo replaced his general manager and went through three coaches and three quarterbacks in his first two years.

"This just can't go on," DeBartolo remembers saying to himself.

Then he found Bill Walsh and drafted Joe Montana.

A week after coaching Stanford to a Bluebonnet Bowl win over Georgia in 1978, Walsh met with the 49ers owner in a small hotel room at the Fairmont. DeBartolo says it took "no more than 10 or 15 minutes" before he knew Walsh had all the qualities he wanted in a coach.

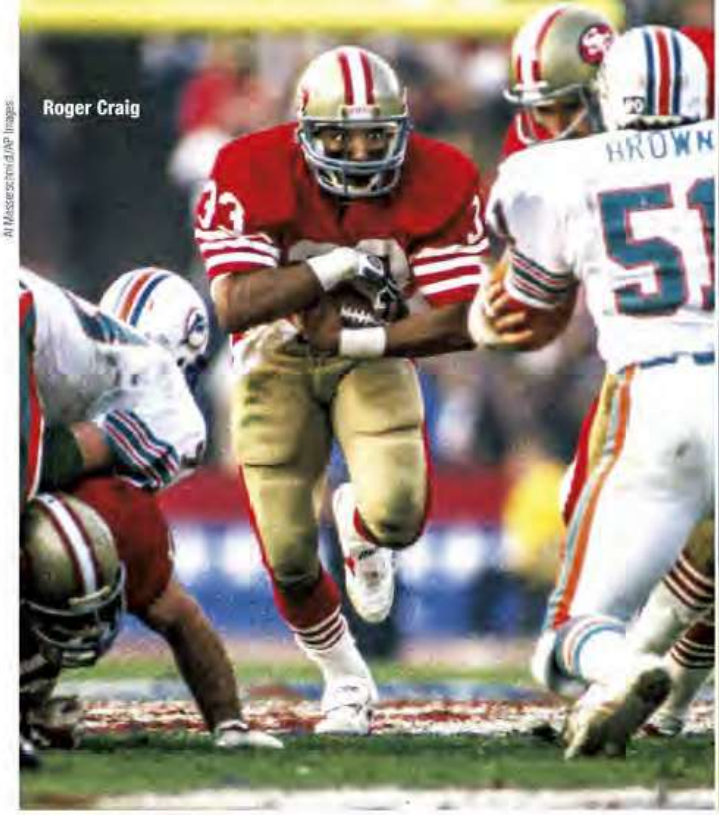
"He told me about his philosophy about football, and we talked about family a lot," DeBartolo says. "I don't know. I just felt a kinship to him. We just hit it off."

Not everyone was on board with the hiring. Policy contends "some really prominent voices presented credible opposition." Even DeBartolo's father, Eddie Sr., was against it. DeBartolo, though, listened to his gut.

"That," Policy says, "started everything."

Walsh knew his top priority was finding a quarterback. The 49ers scouted college seniors Phil Simms and Steve Fuller, but the team was without a first-round pick in 1979 (having traded what turned out to be the No. 1 overall choice to the Bills for O.J. Simpson the previous year). Walsh's quarterback at Stanford, Steve Dils, who went in the fourth round to the Vikings, also was on the team's radar. Montana, one scouting report read, "doesn't have great tools, but could eventually start."

But Montana became the 49ers' target when assistant coach Sam Wyche went to UCLA to work out receiver/running back James Owens. Montana threw to Owens and was so impressive that Wyche told Walsh


Roger Craig

Al Messerschmidt/AP Images

Deion Branch

they needed to take another look. So the 49ers coach went to work out Montana himself and then had general manager John McVay call Notre Dame assistant coach Jim Gruden for a scouting report.

"Jimmy Gruden said, 'Just draft him,'" McVay remembers, "and we did. To this day, I'm shocked he was there in the third round."

The 49ers continued to build around their young quarterback over the next few years: They selected defensive back Ronnie Lott in the first round in 1981, running back Roger Craig in the second round in 1983, receiver Jerry Rice in the first round in 1985, and defensive end Charles Haley in the fourth round in 1986. In 1987, they traded second- and fourth-round draft picks for QB Steve Young.

Walsh won three Super Bowls before turning the reins over to assistant George Seifert, who won two more. Montana won four before Young led the 49ers to their fifth.

The Patriots hope for a similar succession plan when Belichick and Brady eventually call it quits.

"I think it's a culture and a system," Kraft says. "We've had the good fortune to have the two of them at the same time; this is their 18th year together. We'll probably never get a pair like that again, at least in my lifetime, so we've got to find other ways to build a system to complement it. In the meantime, I've learned to just enjoy it and keep it going as long as we can."

Kraft owned Patriots season tickets for 23 years before he bought the team on Jan. 21, 1994. At the time, the franchise had qualified for the playoffs only six times in its 35 years and had faced occasional whispers about relocation. That still didn't stop Kraft from declaring, to the delight of the team's fans, that his "objective in buying the Patriots is to help bring a championship to New England." He sold his dream short.

In 1996, the Patriots won the AFC title but lost Super Bowl XXXI to the Packers, 35-21. That was Bill Parcells' final game with New England as the Patriots traded him to the Jets and hired Pete Carroll. Carroll lasted three seasons before Belichick's messy divorce from the Jets landed him in New England. Belichick forced himself out of New York, with the Jets eventually agreeing to a trade, getting a first-round pick in 2000 and fourth- and seventh-rounders in 2001 in return for Belichick. Five Super Bowl titles and more than 200 victories later, the trade is considered one of the best – or the worst, depending on perspective – in NFL history.

"It's funny because everyone says, 'Well, if Belichick didn't have Brady, he wouldn't have the success,'" says NBC analyst Rodney Harrison, who played for the Patriots from 2003-08. "I said, 'Well, you dummies, he's the one who drafted Brady, and he's the one who sat a guy (Drew Bledsoe) who had a $100 million contract to play a sixth-round draft choice."

It's not like the Patriots saw something in Brady other teams didn't; he lasted until the sixth round, the 199th overall pick of the 2000 NFL Draft. Six other quarterbacks went before Brady, who weighed 211 pounds at the combine and ran a 5.28 with a 24.5-inch vertical jump.

Brady has mocked one scouting report of him: "Poor build. Skinny. Lacks great physical stature and strength. Lacks mobility and ability to avoid the rush. Lacks a really strong arm. Can't drive the ball downfield. Does not throw a really tight spiral. System-type player who can get exposed if forced to ad lib. Gets knocked down easily."

The Patriots drafted six players before Brady, with those players combining for 20 seasons, 65 career starts, and no Pro Bowls. None of them lasted more than five seasons. Meanwhile, Brady keeps going, and going, and going....

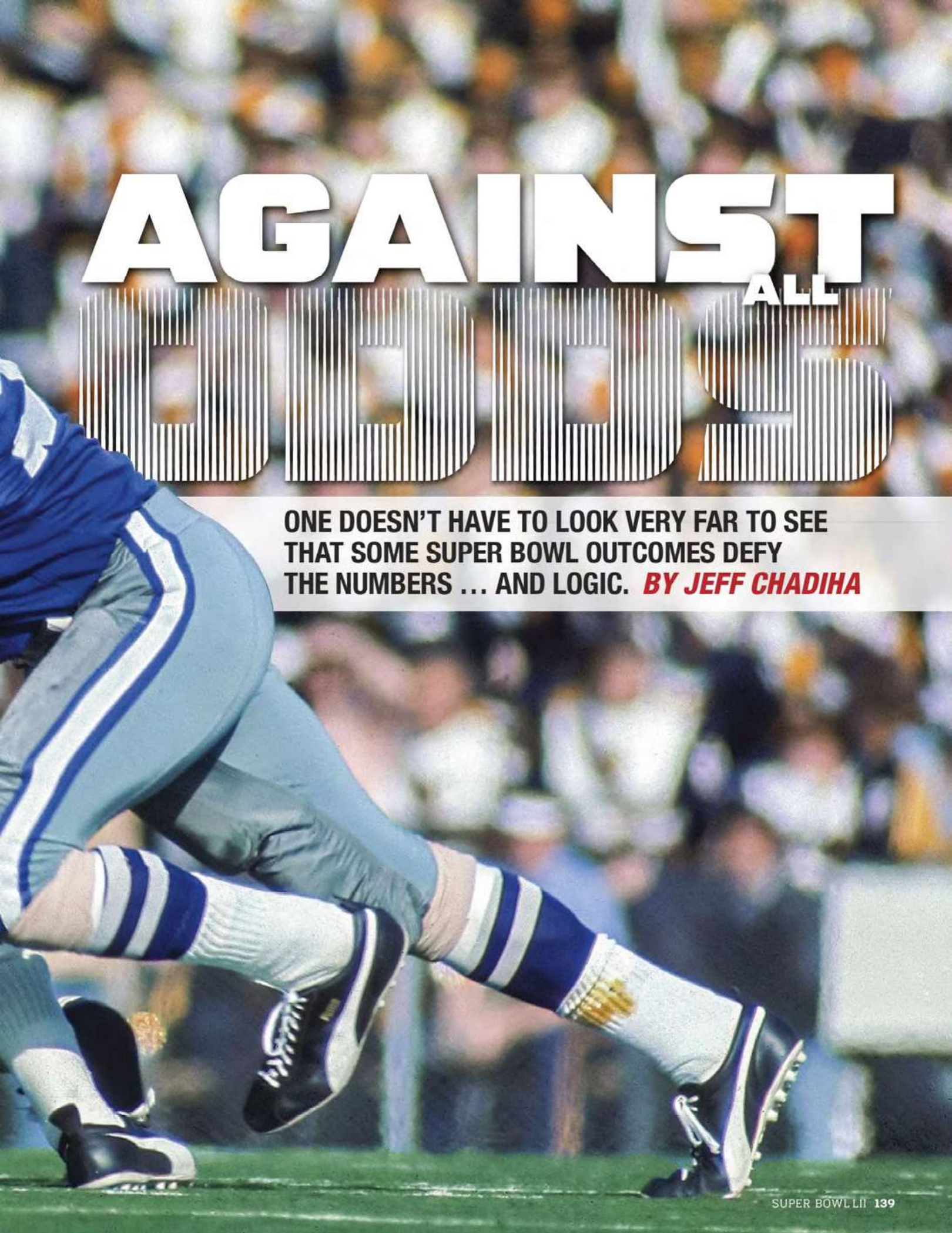
"I believe [after] Tom Brady is gone, I still think they can keep it up," Harrison says. "Now, can they keep it up to the level that they're doing right now? Even without Brady, I think they can be an 11-, 12-win team, because of the system. But when you have Brady, man, that just gives you a little edge.

"But I do think they have to win another one to be the greatest of all time. They're right there with the San Francisco 49ers, but if they win another Super Bowl, there's just no question about it, this team is the greatest dynasty of all time."

__Charean Williams__, a writer for NBC's Pro Football Talk, has covered the NFL for 24 seasons. She is a Pro Football Hall of Fame selector.

Chuck Howley (54) remains the only player from a losing team to be named Super Bowl MVP, earning the award in Dallas' Super Bowl V setback to the Colts.

Walter Iooss Jr./Getty Images



AGAINST ALL ODDS

ONE DOESN'T HAVE TO LOOK VERY FAR TO SEE THAT SOME SUPER BOWL OUTCOMES DEFY THE NUMBERS … AND LOGIC. ***BY JEFF CHADIHA***

If you watch enough football, you know there's a certain predictability that comes with some well-known, hard-and-fast rules.

Stopping the run, winning the turnover battle, controlling time of possession – these are just a few of the factors that help determine which team eventually will win the game. When that game becomes the biggest event on the planet – the Super Bowl – the rules become even more valuable in explaining success.

That is until something happens to blow all that common sense out of the water.

Take, for example, last year's Patriots' 34-28 overtime win over Atlanta. The Falcons became the 13th team to return an interception for a touchdown in the Super Bowl … and the first to lose after doing so. They also somehow lost despite committing fewer turnovers (teams doing that had gone 37-4 in Super Bowl history), scoring first (winners were 34-16 prior to that contest), and leading by 25 points late in the third quarter (the largest Super Bowl comeback previously had been 10 points).

In other words, the end result was something that probably never should have happened.

Super Bowl LI wasn't merely a coronation of the Patriots, who earned their fifth Lombardi Trophy. It also provided the opportunity to recall other notable Super Bowl performances that belied the result one would expect.

WHAT DOES A QB HAVE TO DO?

Falcons quarterback Matt Ryan learned a harsh lesson in Super Bowl LI, one delivered at the hands of Tom Brady. History will remember Brady that night for winning his record-breaking fourth Super Bowl MVP award after engineering an unprecedented comeback. Ryan's place in the record book is hardly an honor he would covet. He's now known as the quarterback who had the best performance in a Super Bowl game he ultimately lost.

Ryan's 144.1 passer rating is the highest by a losing quarterback in a Super Bowl and the fourth-highest rating any signal-caller has produced in the contest, placing him behind only the Giants' Phil Simms (150.9 in Super Bowl XXI), the 49ers' Joe Montana (147.6 in Super Bowl XXIV), and the Raiders' Jim Plunkett (145.0 in Super Bowl XV). In fact, nine of the top 10 passer ratings in Super Bowl history have been turned in by victorious QBs.

If there's any consolation for Ryan, it's that Brady – who posted a 95.2 rating after throwing for a Super Bowl record 466 yards and two touchdowns – has broken plenty of hearts before. Russell Wilson had a 110.6 passer rating against New England in Super Bowl XLIX, but a last-minute interception by Patriots cornerback Malcolm Butler ended the Seahawks' hopes of repeating as world champions. Panthers quarterback Jake Delhomme fell victim to New England in Super Bowl XXXVIII; his passer rating was 113.6 in that 32-29 loss.

Overall, three of the four highest passer ratings that resulted in Super Bowl losses came against New England. So while the NFL is a quarterback-driven league, sometimes it's best to avoid one particular quarterback in its biggest game.

WHAT DOESN'T A QB HAVE TO DO?

Ben Roethlisberger broke ground in a couple of areas when the Steelers beat Seattle, 21-10, in Super Bowl XL. At the age of 23 years, 11 months, and four days, he became (and remains) the youngest quarterback to win a Super Bowl. But that game won't go on his list of top individual efforts. In fact, it was the worst performance by any winning quarterback in Super Bowl history. His final stat line: 9-of-21 passing, 123 yards, no touchdowns, two interceptions, and a 22.6 passer rating.

In fairness to Roethlisberger, other quarterbacks have similarly struggled and still did enough to earn victory in the big game. Denver's Peyton Manning completed just 13 of 23 passes for 141

Getty Images

Matt Ryan's 144.1 passer rating in Super Bowl LI set a record, but came in a heartbreaking loss for the Falcons.

While Ben Roethlisberger (7) won't remember Super Bowl XL for his individual statistics, he did help the Steelers win "one for the thumb."

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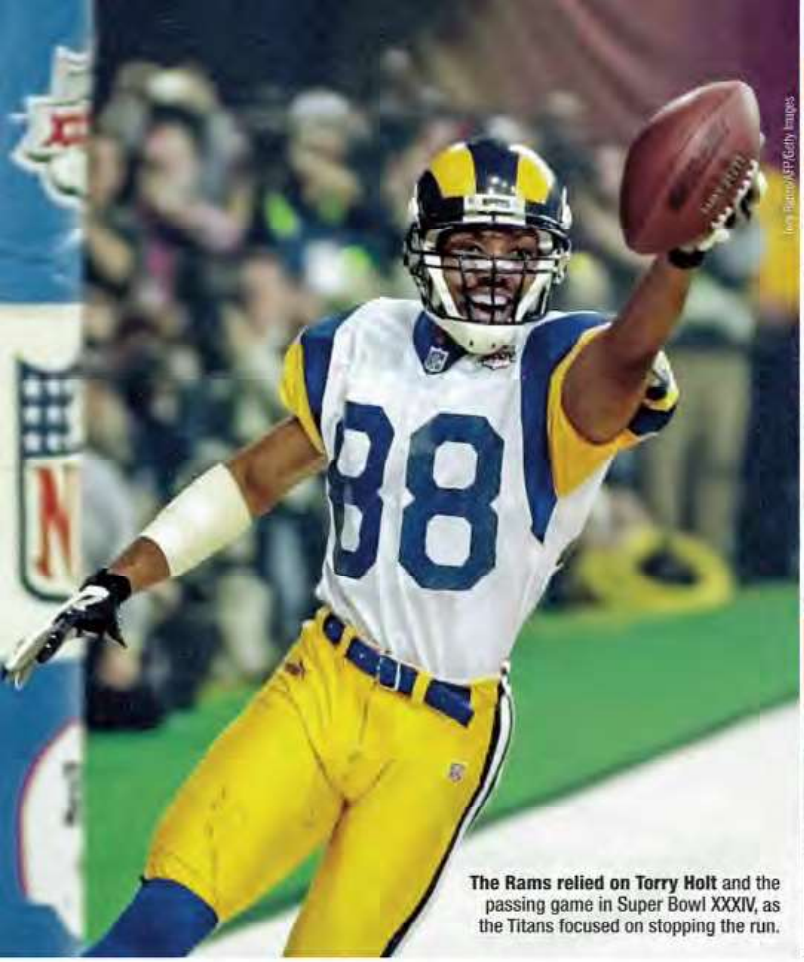

Jon Soohoo/AFP/Getty Images

Manny Rubio/USA TODAY Sports

The Rams relied on Torry Holt and the passing game in Super Bowl XXXIV, as the Titans focused on stopping the run.

yards with one interception in Super Bowl 50. The Ravens' Trent Dilfer was only 12 for 25 for 153 yards and one touchdown in Super Bowl XXXV, while another Baltimore quarterback, the Colts' Earl Morrall, only connected on seven of his 15 attempts in Super Bowl V.

The nice thing for Roethlisberger is that he played on a Pittsburgh team that didn't need him to be a superstar that day. The Steelers had the league's fifth-best rushing offense and fourth-best defense. They also had so many other weapons that Roethlisberger didn't even throw the team's best pass of the game; that honor belonged to wide receiver Antwaan Randle El, who hit Hines Ward with a 43-yard touchdown toss.

Of course, Roethlisberger did acquit himself nicely in his next Super Bowl appearance. He threw for 256 yards and connected with wide receiver Santonio Holmes on a six-yard, game-winning touchdown against the Cardinals in Super Bowl XLIII.

People also forget something else important about Roethlisberger in his first Super Bowl run: If he hadn't made a touchdown-saving tackle after Jerome Bettis fumbled late in a 21-18 divisional round victory over Indianapolis, the Steelers would have never reached the Super Bowl in the first place.

A (MORAL) VICTORY OF SORTS

Cowboys linebacker Chuck Howley was on the losing end of arguably the ugliest Super Bowl ever – a 16-13 defeat at the hands of the Baltimore Colts in Super Bowl V – yet he still left the game with a notable distinction. Howley remains the only player to be named Most Valuable Player after his team lost.

So how did Howley achieve such an honor? It helped that literally nobody else did enough to impress those who voted for the award. The two teams combined for 11 turnovers (the Colts astonishingly won despite giving the ball away seven times) and 14 penalties. The only big offensive play the Colts produced was a 75-yard touchdown pass from quarterback Johnny Unitas to tight end John Mackey (on a throw that was tipped twice). Howley, on the other hand, had two interceptions, positioning Dallas for victory until Baltimore's Jim O'Brien kicked a 32-yard field goal with five seconds left.

Howley was stunned by the award and admits it took a while to embrace it. When interviewed by Vice Sports, he said he was showering as the news arrived. Said Howley: "I think some of my teammates said, 'Congratulations,' and I said, 'For what?'"

GROUND TO A HALT

The 1999 St. Louis Rams are widely known for being "The Greatest Show on Turf." They could beat opponents with Kurt Warner's arm, Marshall Faulk's versatility, and the collective talents of speedy receivers Isaac Bruce, Torry Holt, and Az-Zahir Hakim. What the Rams couldn't do in Super Bowl XXXIV was beat the Titans without making their own mark on history. Ironically, that distinction had nothing to do with anything the Rams would have been proud of on that day.

The same Rams team that scored 526 points, led the league in total yards, and boasted a future Hall of Fame running back managed just one rushing first down in the 23-16 win. Faulk – who rushed for 1,381 yards and amassed another 1,048 receiving yards during the 1999 season – mustered just 17 yards on 10 carries. It was as if the Titans were willing to gamble on the idea of taking Faulk away and forcing Warner to beat them. Ultimately, it was a bet that didn't pay off, as Warner threw for 414 yards and completed a 73-yard game-winning touchdown pass to Bruce.

There's one other team that had only one rushing first down in a Super Bowl win: New England, when it beat Seattle in Super Bowl XLIX.

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The play of Cincinnati's Ken Anderson (14) in Super Bowl XVI would have been good enough to defeat most teams, but not the 49ers.

Eric Risberg/AP Images

Bill Parcells is among six coaches who have taken two different teams to the Super Bowl. He won titles with the Giants in Super Bowls XXI and XXV.

The Patriots, however, didn't have the kind of firepower the Rams possessed in their backfield. Also keep in mind that the team with fewer rushing first downs is 11-36 in the Super Bowl and the "facts on the ground" really don't add up (there have been four times when teams had the same number of rushing first downs). On the other hand, that likely explains why the Titans almost pulled a major upset.

NUMBERS DON'T TELL THE WHOLE STORY

It's ironic that a franchise so revered for its revolutionary offensive success wound up winning its first Super Bowl with a fairly unimpressive showing on that side of the football. Yes, the 49ers were the undisputed team of the 1980s. Yes, that organization enjoyed a dynasty that eventually won five Super Bowls and introduced legends that included Joe Montana and Jerry Rice to the world. All those spectacular achievements make their 26-21 win over Cincinnati in Super Bowl XVI even more surprising.

San Francisco became the first team to win the Super Bowl despite being outgained by its opponent. The Bengals amassed 356 yards to the 49ers' 275 that day. Bengals quarterback Ken Anderson also scorched San Francisco's defense in the second half, completing 17 of 20 passes in the process of setting then-Super Bowl records for most completions (25) and highest completion percentage in a game (73.5). As much as Cincinnati struggled to move the ball in the first half – when they only gained 99 yards and fell behind by a score of 20-0 – they looked like a different team over the final two quarters.

The outcome might have been different if the Bengals hadn't been so sloppy early. They were largely done in by four turnovers and a 49ers goal-line stand in the third quarter. So instead of winning the team's first championship – a quest that continues to this day – the Bengals will be remembered for producing a ton of yardage that didn't amount to much. In doing so, they join a dubious group: Only 12 times in 51 Super Bowls has a team outgained its opponent and wound up losing.

SOME RULES DO RULE

Don't commit a turnover in the Super Bowl, and you're guaranteed to win. Almost. Of the 20 teams to not turn the ball over in the Super Bowl, 18 have been victorious. And the two that lost? They were beaten by opponents that likewise didn't have a turnover. The Titans, who dropped Super Bowl XXXIV to the Rams, and the Bills, who were edged by the Giants in Super Bowl XXV, are the lone turnover-less teams that failed to bring home the Lombardi Trophy. And, just as you would expect, those games were in doubt until the final seconds.

So let's close with one stat that doesn't have an exception. For although six head coaches have taken two different teams to the Super Bowl, no one has won the Super Bowl at the helm of both teams.

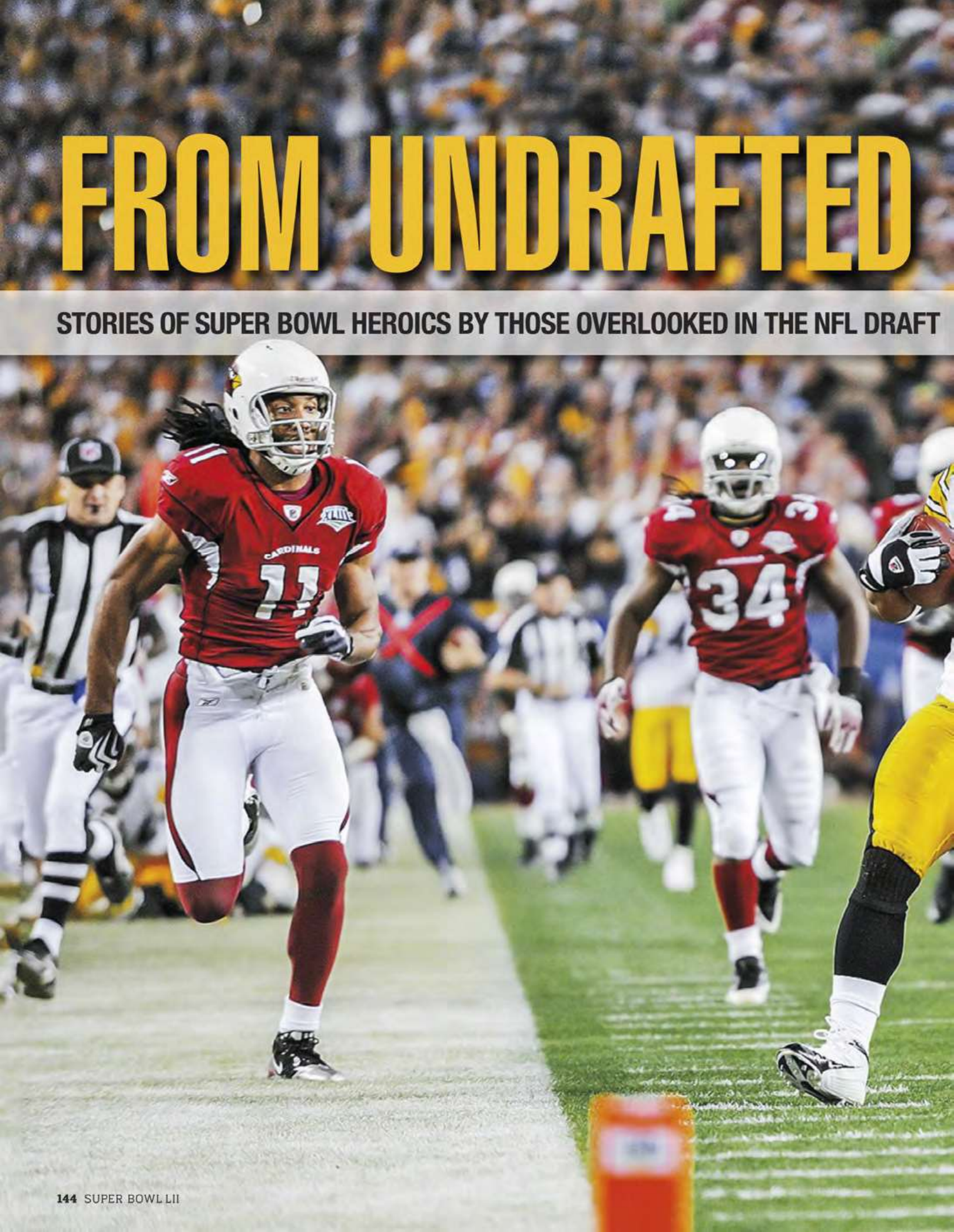
Don Shula coached the Colts in Super Bowl III (a loss to the Jets) before guiding the Dolphins to five Super Bowls, winning twice. Dick Vermeil dropped Super Bowl XV as coach of the Eagles, but won 19 years later with the Rams in Super Bowl XXXIV. Bill Parcells guided the Giants to victory in Super Bowls XXI and XXV, then lost as the Patriots coach in Super Bowl XXXI to the Packers.

The coach who beat him in that game was Mike Holmgren, who later led the Seahawks to Super Bowl XL, where they fell to Pittsburgh. Dan Reeves was on the losing side of Super Bowls both at the helm of the Broncos (XXI, XXII) and the Falcons (XXXIII), similar to John Fox, whose Carolina squad fell in Super Bowl XXXVIII and whose Denver team was beaten in Super Bowl XLVIII.

Jeff Chadiha is an Emmy award-winning journalist with NFL Media. He works as both a senior writer for NFL.com and on-air talent for NFL Network.

FROM UNDRAFTED

STORIES OF SUPER BOWL HEROICS BY THOSE OVERLOOKED IN THE NFL DRAFT



to UNFORGETTABLE

ARE NUMEROUS … AND OFTEN INTERTWINED. *BY JUDY BATTISTA*

John Biever/Getty Images

Bypassed in the 2002 NFL Draft because of his size, James Harrison (92) became a standout linebacker whose 100-yard interception-return touchdown was instrumental to the Steelers' Super Bowl XLIII win.

THE TENNESSEE TITANS had just kicked a late field goal to tie Super Bowl XXXIV, giving St. Louis Rams coach Dick Vermeil a few moments with his quarterback, Kurt Warner, on the sideline before the next drive.

"He said, 'You've played this out in your front yard: two minutes to go, ball in your hands, you have a chance to win the Super Bowl,'" Warner remembers. "To make the throw, it couldn't have been more perfect."

Perhaps not the throw itself – the rainbow toss to Isaac Bruce along the right sideline was, in truth, a tad underthrown, forcing Bruce to come back for the ball before racing for a 73-yard touchdown. Yet the moment and what it represented for Warner and his remarkable path to NFL stardom cannot be overstated.

Warner, who last summer was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame, is far from the only undrafted, unheralded player to make a mark on the Super Bowl. According to NFL Media research, undrafted players have either played in or been on the roster of every team to appear in the Super Bowl since the 1970 AFL/NFL merger.

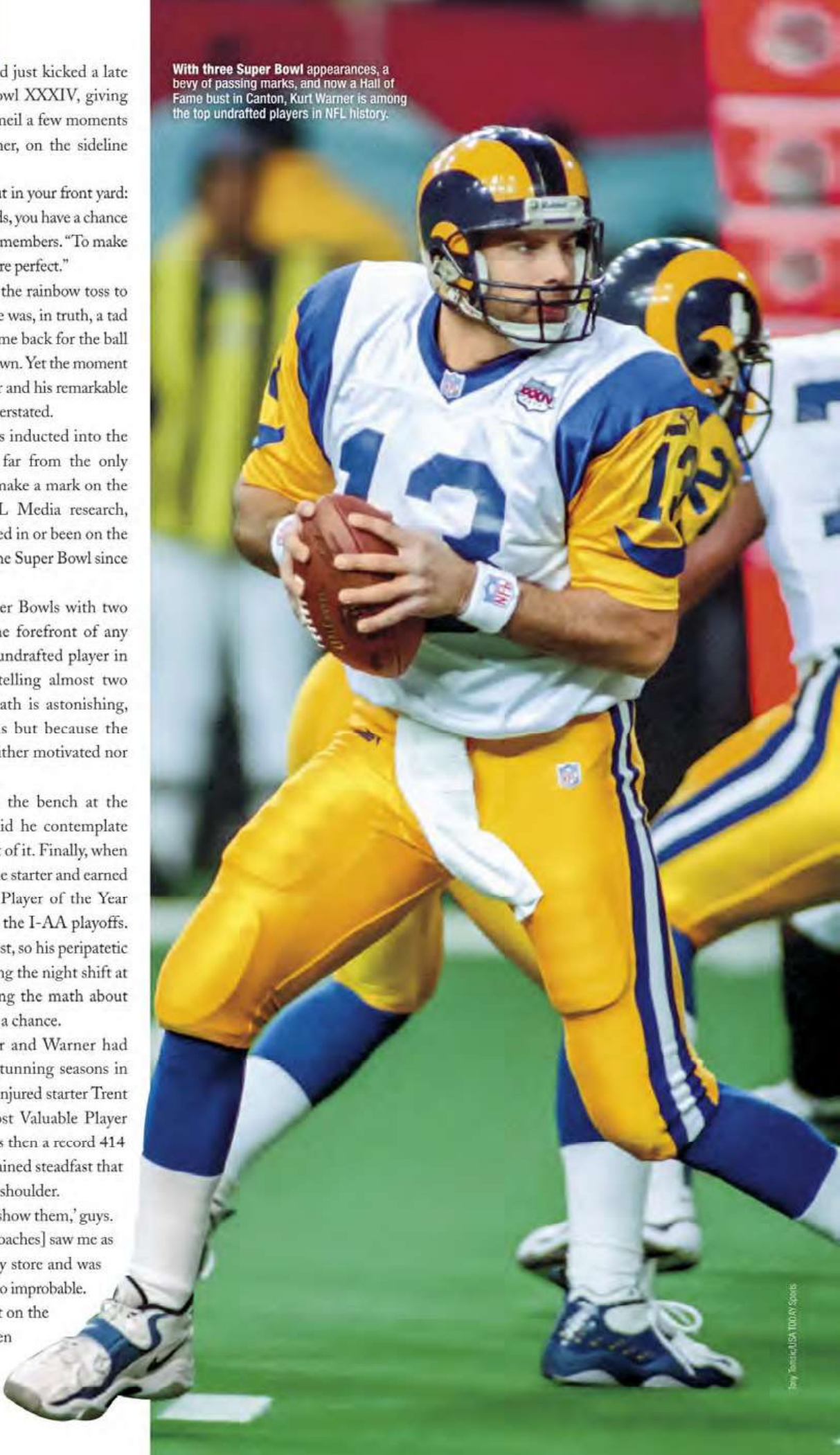
But after reaching three Super Bowls with two different teams, Warner is at the forefront of any conversation about the greatest undrafted player in football history. Even in its retelling almost two decades later, Warner's career path is astonishing, not just for its twists and turns but because the quarterback remembers being neither motivated nor deterred by it – merely frustrated.

Just once, during a stint on the bench at the University of Northern Iowa, did he contemplate quitting. His mom talked him out of it. Finally, when he was a senior, Warner became the starter and earned Gateway Conference Offensive Player of the Year honors while leading his team to the I-AA playoffs. Still, he garnered little NFL interest, so his peripatetic road to the Rams began by working the night shift at a Hy-Vee grocery store and doing the math about how old would be "too old" to get a chance.

Once the obscurity was over and Warner had put together one of the most stunning seasons in NFL history in 1999 – replacing injured starter Trent Green, winning the league's Most Valuable Player award, and throwing for what was then a record 414 yards in the Super Bowl – he remained steadfast that he did not play with a chip on his shoulder.

"I was never one of those, 'I'll show them,' guys.

"When I came on the scene, [coaches] saw me as someone who worked in a grocery store and was now playing," Warner says. "It was so improbable. But what I saw was different. I sat on the bench for four years in college, then played my fifth year and was the conference's player of the year. I



With three Super Bowl appearances, a bevy of passing marks, and now a Hall of Fame bust in Canton, Kurt Warner is among the top undrafted players in NFL history.

Tony Tomsic/USA TODAY Sports

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HELMETS TO HARDHATS

Adam Vinatieri (4), who signed with the Patriots as an undrafted free agent in 1996, ended up being the hero of their first two Super Bowl victories.

John Rivera/Getty Images

was cut by the Packers, but played Arena football and was the best quarterback in that league, and then I went to Europe and was the best quarterback there.

"Every time I had a chance, I was extremely successful. I wondered, 'Why can't everybody see that when I played, I was really, really good?'"

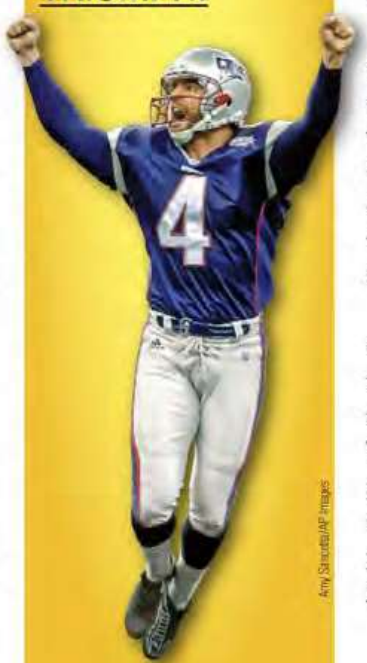
Incredibly, Warner lost in his next two Super Bowl appearances – XXXVI and XLIII – in large part because of efforts by fellow undrafted players. Two years after their Super Bowl victory, the Rams were back in the big game. But there, they encountered the New England Patriots, with a young quarterback named Tom Brady and a sturdy kicker: Adam Vinatieri.

Vinatieri went undrafted after playing at South Dakota State and spent time with the World League's Amsterdam Admirals before being signed by the Patriots in 1996. Just a few weeks after kicking a pair of huge field goals in a blizzard to beat the Raiders in the 2001 AFC playoffs, Vinatieri nailed a 48-yard field goal on the game's final play to give the Patriots their first Super Bowl triumph. (Two years later in Super Bowl XXXVIII, in an almost identical situation, Vinatieri made a 41-yard field goal with four seconds left to lift the Patriots to another championship.)

Warner, after several career ups and downs, would find himself back in the Super Bowl for a third time, now as a member of the Arizona Cardinals.

But lining up across from him was the Steelers' James Harrison, who made Kent State's football team

VINATIERI NAILED A 48-YARD FIELD GOAL ON THE GAME'S FINAL PLAY TO GIVE THE PATRIOTS THEIR 1ST SUPER BOWL TRIUMPH.



Amy Sancetta/AP Images

as a walk-on and then went undrafted in 2002, with NFL teams concerned he was too short to be a linebacker and too light to play on the defensive line. The Steelers signed him as a free agent – with a signing bonus of $2,000 – and he spent two years on and off the practice squad and was released three times.

"For me, it was motivation," Harrison admits. "I had to learn what to do (in the Steelers' defense). You had to know everything. There was one time I was like, 'Just get me off the field, I don't know what I'm doing.'

"I was flustered and frustrated from trying to understand."

In late 2003, Harrison was signed by the Ravens and sent to NFL Europe. He was released a fourth time and decided that if he didn't get picked up soon, he would get a "regular" job. But when Steelers linebacker Clark Haggans suffered an injury during training camp, Harrison returned to Pittsburgh. He figured he wouldn't last, but thought it was a good chance to put some plays on film to catch the interest of other teams.

By then, Harrison had figured out defensive coordinator Dick LeBeau's schemes. Suddenly everything clicked, he made the team, and in 2007 – with the departure of Joey Porter – he was named a starter. The next year, Harrison became the first undrafted player to win the NFL's Defensive Player of the Year award. And in Super Bowl XLIII, he made a huge play in a game that was full of them. With seconds to go in the first half, the Cardinals were driving to take

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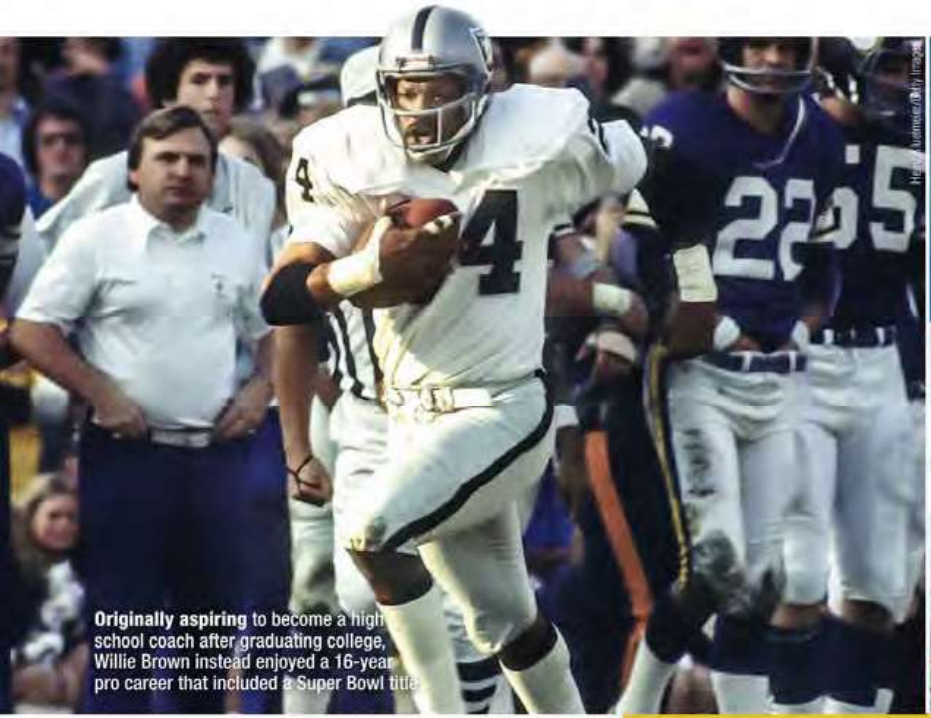
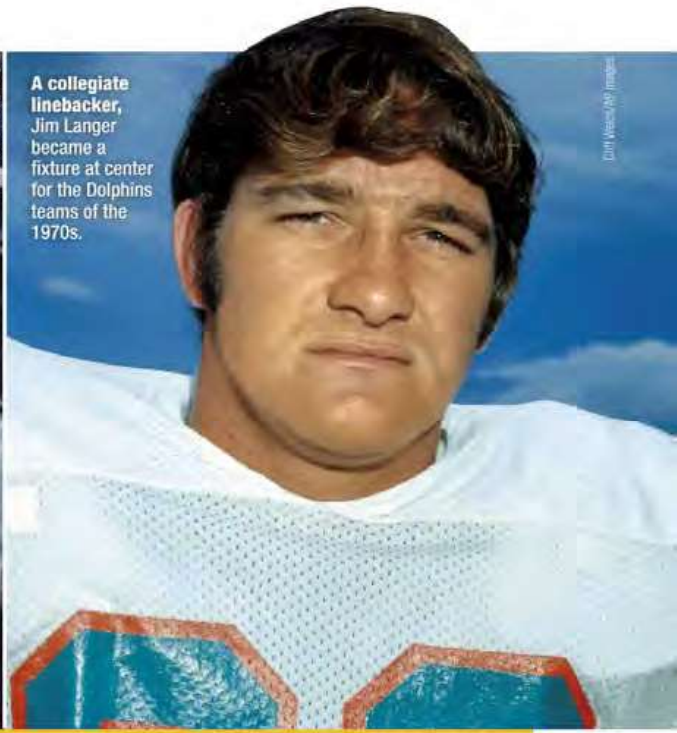


Originally aspiring to become a high school coach after graduating college, Willie Brown instead enjoyed a 16-year pro career that included a Super Bowl title.



A collegiate linebacker, Jim Langer became a fixture at center for the Dolphins teams of the 1970s.

the lead. From the 1-yard line, Warner wanted to hit a short slant pass to Anquan Boldin for a touchdown.

The Steelers were in an all-out blitz, but Harrison gambled and dropped into coverage instead. He thought Warner looked right at him – Warner says he never saw him – and couldn't believe it when the QB threw his way. Harrison made the pick and took off on a halting, rumbling run down the right sideline, complete with hand fighting, vaulting a lineman, and fending off a last-ditch swat from Cardinals receiver Larry Fitzgerald. Exhausted, he collapsed upon reaching the end zone, having scored on a Super Bowl-record 100-yard interception return and turning what could have been a four-point Steelers deficit into a 10-point lead. Pittsburgh ended up winning the game, 27-23.

Hall of Famer Willie Brown, who spent 16 seasons with the Broncos and Raiders, had a similar game-turning interception in the Super Bowl. For him, it was unimaginable he'd be in a position to make such a play. In fact, he gave such little thought to even playing pro football that his main goal after graduating from Grambling in 1963 was to become a high school coach.

But a scout for the Houston Oilers stopped by the school to talk to its legendary coach Eddie Robinson about signing Brown as a free agent. Brown decided to try it, and was the team's last cut of the preseason. Then the Broncos called and he went there, with the coaches asking him to teach other players how to play bump-and-run coverage. In his second season, Brown had nine interceptions and was named All-Pro.

Similar to Warner, Brown said he wasn't bothered that he went undrafted – there weren't many black players in pro football in those days. But once he got on a team, he took it as an affront when a quarterback

Other Undrafted Super Bowl Standouts

In the Super Bowl's 51-year history, many other undrafted players have made a big impact on Super Bowl Sunday and throughout their careers. The list includes:

- **MALCOLM BUTLER** – Defensive back out of West Alabama capped his 2014 rookie season with a goal-line interception that preserved the Patriots' Super Bowl XLIX win.
- **CLIFF HARRIS** – "Captain Crash" (pictured) graduated from Ouachita Baptist in 1970 and played 10 seasons with Dallas, earning six Pro Bowl selections and two Super Bowl titles.
- **JOE JACOBY** – This original "Hog" went undrafted from Louisville in 1981, then signed with Washington and played on three Super Bowl championship teams and was named to NFL's 1980s All-Decade Team.
- **LARRY LITTLE** – Bethune-Cookman grad became a force at guard on the great Dolphins teams that made three straight Super Bowl appearances in the '70s, winning twice. *1993 Pro Football Hall of Fame enshrinee*
- **NATE NEWTON** – Florida A&M product entered the NFL in 1986 and became a star left guard for the Cowboys, earning six Pro Bowls selections and winning three Super Bowl titles.
- **WILLIE PARKER** – Running back from North Carolina signed with Steelers in 2004 and won two Super Bowl titles while setting mark for longest touchdown run in Super Bowl history: 75 yards in SB XL.
- **DREW PEARSON** – Standout receiver from Tulsa was overlooked in 1973 NFL Draft, but spent 11 years with the Cowboys, reaching three Super Bowls and earning a spot on NFL's 1970s All-Decade Team.
- **JEFF SATURDAY** – North Carolina graduate had a 14-year NFL career as a starting center, earning six Pro Bowl selections and winning Super Bowl XLI as a member of the Colts.
- **DONNIE SHELL** – 1974 South Carolina State grad signed with the Steelers as a free agent, and went on become a star safety who won four Super Bowl titles and was selected to five Pro Bowls.
- **EMMITT THOMAS** – Enjoyed 13-year career with Chiefs after graduating from Bishop in 1966; made 58 career interceptions and picked off a pass in Super Bowl IV win. *2008 Pro Football Hall of Fame enshrinee*
- **WILLIE WOOD** – College quarterback at USC was converted to safety by the Packers, who he helped lead to two Super Bowls – with his interception sparking the team's Super Bowl I victory over the Chiefs. *1989 Pro Football Hall of Fame enshrinee*

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tried to complete a pass to a receiver he was covering.

"I was an elite player coming out of high school, and an elite player in college," Brown says. "I knew if a team got me, I could easily crack the lineup because I started bump and run, and everybody else played off. Players couldn't get by me."

Vikings quarterback Fran Tarkenton tried to get a pass by Brown in Super Bowl XI. Of the nearly five dozen interceptions Brown made in his pro career, perhaps none was more spectacular than the one that came with the Raiders fending off a late Minnesota comeback. As Tarkenton took the snap, Brown slowly backpedaled, and when the QB's pass for Sammy White came his way, he sprung, jumping the route and intercepting the ball.

Brown knew immediately he was going to score because nobody could catch him. Seventy-five yards later, he had sealed the Raiders' first Super Bowl title.

Jim Langer also had another career path in mind: He was a commissioned second lieutenant in the U.S. Army and was scheduled to go on active duty soon after earning his economics degree from South Dakota State in 1970. But a call from the Cleveland Browns expressing interest in the collegiate middle linebacker changed everything. Langer then spoke with his friend Gale Gillingham, who played for the Packers and told him that it would be worthwhile to give it a shot.

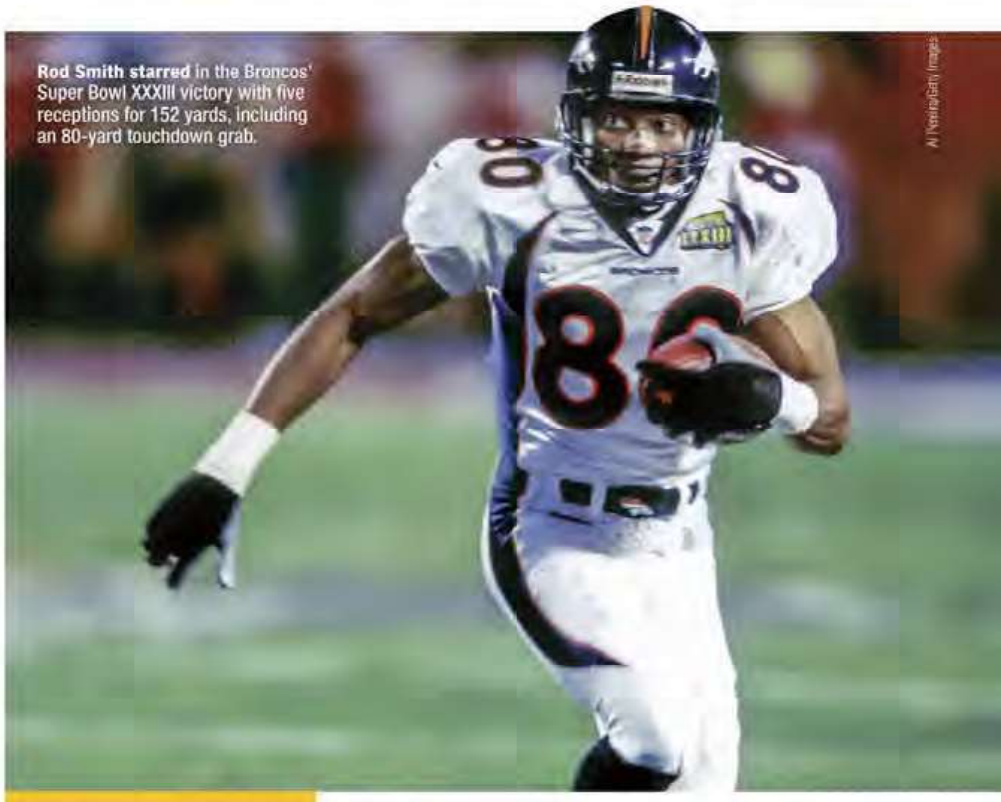
Langer had a solid training camp and was assigned to the team's taxi squad, but was then claimed by the Miami Dolphins. He was disappointed because he had to start all over, and said it took him three years to feel he could actually play in the NFL. In that third year, however, he was the starting center on the 1972 Dolphins, the only "perfect" team in NFL history. Langer would play in three Super Bowls with Miami.

"Some of the last words I heard when I left South Dakota State came from one of the coaches, who told me, 'Well Jim, you're not going to make it, but it's a good experience for you,'" Langer recalls.

"Lo and behold, a guy from a little Division II school can play with guys from Big 10 schools. The road is littered with [first round] draft picks that couldn't play football."

Wide receiver Rod Smith was no first rounder either. After a stellar, though injury-marred, Division II career at Missouri Southern State, Smith sat and watched the entire 1995 NFL Draft hoping to hear his name. He was hurt when he didn't. But when the Broncos called about signing as a free agent, he had the opportunity to prove the rest of the league wrong.

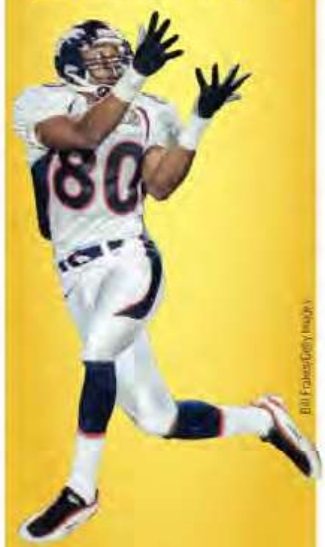
"It was like a tree or a forest, it was way bigger than a chip on my shoulder," Smith says. "Chip was way too small. When you grow up in the projects with nothing, opportunity comes around all the time and you don't notice it. This, I noticed."



Rod Smith starred in the Broncos' Super Bowl XXXIII victory with five receptions for 152 yards, including an 80-yard touchdown grab.

Al Pereira/Getty Images

"WHEN YOU'RE NOT DRAFTED, YOU ALWAYS FEEL YOU'RE THE LOWEST MAN ON THE TOTEM POLE AND THAT'S TRUE. SO WORK YOUR WAY UP THE TOTEM POLE." – ROD SMITH



Bill Frakes/Getty Images

Smith was on the roster when the Broncos defeated the Packers in Super Bowl XXXII, but didn't have a catch in the game. He was determined to make at least one when the team returned to the Super Bowl the next season to face the Falcons. He got it on the first possession, a slant that went for 41 yards.

Then he got a lot more. As the Broncos were about to start a drive late in the first half, Mike Shanahan spoke to quarterback John Elway and running back Terrell Davis on the sideline, but told nobody else about the play he wanted to run. Smith was directed to run a post route. He did, and as he turned to look for Elway, he saw the quarterback running a bootleg before throwing the ball deep. Smith hauled in the pass near midfield and raced for an 80-yard touchdown in what became a 34-19 Denver victory.

By the time his career was over, Smith had become the first undrafted player to reach 10,000 receiving yards. And he thinks about the Super Bowl every day. He wrote a book about the business principles he has extracted from a career that took him from the projects and the disappointment of not being drafted to pro football's biggest game.

"You want things to go this way and they don't – how do you respond?" Smith says. "When you're not drafted, you always feel you're the lowest man on the totem pole and that's true. So work your way up the totem pole."

__Judy Battista__ is an award-winning sportswriter who has covered the NFL since 2000. She is a columnist and on-air analyst for NFL.com and NFL Network.

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FROZEN IN TIME

A HALF-CENTURY HAS PASSED SINCE GREEN BAY'S ICONIC 1967 NFL CHAMPIONSHIP GAME TRIUMPH OVER DALLAS.

BY CLIFF CHRISTL

Packers quarterback Bart Starr (15) lies on the ground after scoring the game-winning touchdown in the 1967 NFL Championship Game.

Photo: Ralph Ruthe/USA TODAY Sports

You didn't have to be there – or even be alive at the time it was played – to recognize today that the Ice Bowl was a game for the ages.

Its enduring images validate it.

The hardy fans, their faces hidden by the thick white clouds of their own breath … the bigger-than-life coach, braving the brutal elements in a camel's-hair coat and Ushanka winter hat … the victorious quarterback buried face down among a pile of players in the south end zone of Lambeau Field, whose surface has been affectionately referred to as "The Frozen Tundra" ever since.

Played 50 years ago this past New Year's Eve day, the Ice Bowl – aka the 1967 NFL Championship Game – is one of the iconic games in pro football history.

For NFL Films, which was just starting to document that history, it's a gift that keeps on giving, the result of amazing video imagery and John Facenda's booming baritone voice.

For the Dallas Cowboys, it was both a nightmare and a blessing in disguise. As an eight-year-old expansion franchise, the Cowboys were just cutting their teeth on a national stage and the experience gave rise not only to a lifetime of what-ifs, but also a new dawning that coincided with pro football's blossoming Super Bowl era.

And for the now nearly 100-year-old Green Bay Packers, it remains their signature game, an everlasting microcosm of their storied history.

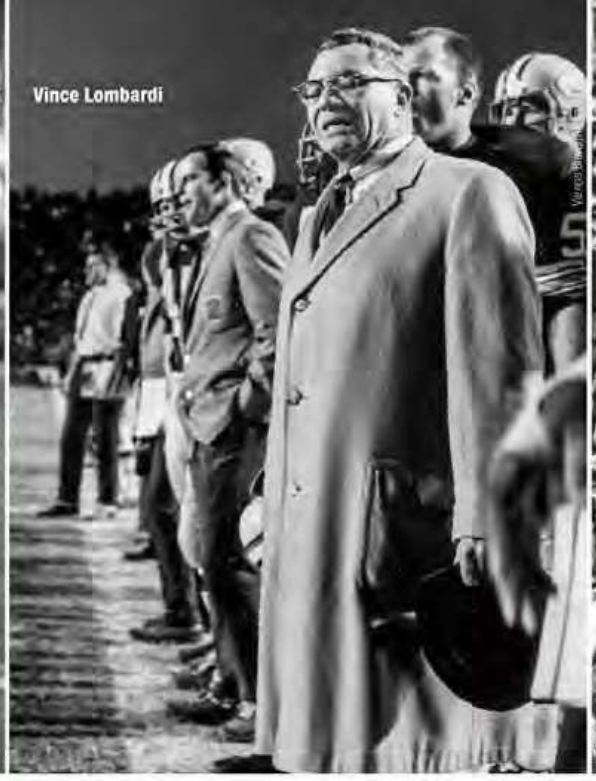
This was a team that played its first games in 1919 on an open field with no fence or bleachers, and two years later was accepted into the American Professional Football Association. From that point forward until at least 1957, when what is now Lambeau Field was built, the Packers were perpetually on their deathbed.

The Acme Packing Company was granted the APFA franchise in August 1921, but was taken over by big-city banks and dropped as a sponsor by the team barely two months later. Not long thereafter, the Packers were booted out of the league for using college players under assumed names, only to be readmitted when the APFA became the NFL in June 1922.

They then survived the cut in 1927 when the league reduced its membership from 22 to 12 teams. In 1933, when they were on the verge of bankruptcy after losing a lawsuit to a fan who had fallen out of the stands at a game, their court-appointed receiver handed the local judge $76.18 in cash, along with judgments and unpaid bills amounting to more than $15,000. And in 1949, as they stared at nearly $90,000 in losses, the Packers were forced to play a Thanksgiving Day intra-squad game simply to raise enough money to finish the season.

Clearly, the Packers had confronted far greater obstacles than the one they faced with four minutes, fifty seconds remaining in the Ice Bowl.

Tom Landry


Vince Lombardi

The day before the game, the high in Green Bay was a relatively tolerable 20 degrees and nobody was expressing dread over the Arctic air mass that had been lingering above Canada for a week or more. The U.S. Weather Bureau's forecast called for a gameday high of 12 degrees with northwest winds from 8 to 14 miles per hour. Not ideal weather by any means, but not out of the norm for Green Bay in late December.

Shortly before midnight, however, that Arctic front spilled south and by 9 a.m., four hours before kickoff, temperatures had plummeted nearly 30 degrees. Worse yet, when league and team officials arrived at the stadium, they learned the recently installed electric blanket under Lambeau's grass turf wasn't operating as expected.

Just a day earlier, Packers coach Vince Lombardi had proudly shown sportswriters the blanket's operating equipment in a small control room off the north tunnel of the stadium. Uninhibitedly impersonating a mad scientist, Lombardi promised there would be no problems with the playing surface.

Two hours or so before kickoff, assistant coaches Bob Schnelker and Ray Wietecha were the first to grasp that wouldn't be so. Director of public relations Chuck Lane was summoned to tell Lombardi, who promptly flew into a rage.

"The system seemed to be working, but the tarp was left on the field and the heat rising from the soil was condensing and then dripping water back into it," explained Lane. "When the tarp was removed, the top layer of soil began to flash freeze and the field turned into what resembled concrete in both color and texture."

"When that game started, the field was very wet, sloppy," Packers linebacker Dave Robinson recalls. "(Then) with the wind blowing across that wet grass, it froze. But it didn't freeze until the third quarter."

Packers linebacker Ray Nitschke, Dallas defensive end George Andrie, and perhaps others suffered frostbite. But players weren't the only victims. One official's whistle stuck to his lips early in the game, and when he removed it, he tore the skin and left a stain of blood on his face.

"There were no whistles during the game at all," Robinson says. "When a tackle was made, the officials said, 'Stop, stop, stop.' They just hollered."

Those covering the game had their problems, too, with frosted windows in the press box and frozen camera lenses around the stadium. Broadcaster Frank Gifford famously said on air, "I think I'll take another bite of my coffee."

Officially, the temperature was minus-13 degrees at kickoff, still the coldest ever for an NFL game. At the time, weather bureau officials determined the wind chill to be minus-46 degrees. Based on the bureau's new wind chill index, the range has since been readjusted to minus-33 to minus-37.

Green Bay trailed, 17-14, when Willie Wood returned a punt nine yards to the Packers 32-yard line and the clock stopped with 4:50 to go. Quarterback Bart Starr, who had earlier thrown two TD passes to Boyd Dowler, confidently jogged onto the field.

Over his first 11 years in the NFL, Starr had proven his greatest assets weren't arm strength or mobility, but his intangibles: leadership, preparation, mental toughness, play-calling … and perseverance.

He was a 17th-round draft pick. He didn't win a pro game that he started and finished until his fourth season. Lombardi then benched him when he played poorly in the 1960 opener. Down by three in the most unbearable conditions any quarterback ever had to endure was the type of challenge Starr had been overcoming all his life.

Adding to the task was the fact it was not the same Packers team that had won four previous NFL championships under Lombardi. Paul Hornung, who as the left halfback had almost always carried the ball on Lombardi's signature power sweep and thrown it on the halfback option, had retired. Jim Taylor, the fullback and workhorse of those teams, had played out his option and was finishing his career with New Orleans.

This was now Starr's offense.

On first down, he flipped a pass to halfback Donny Anderson for six yards. Fullback Chuck Mercein then ran for seven yards around right end. On the play before the two-minute warning, Starr hit Anderson in

Brutally cold temperatures didn't stop Packers fans from filling Lambeau Field for the "Ice Bowl."

Boyd Dowler (86) caught two early touchdown passes that put Green Bay ahead, 14-0, in the second quarter.

the flat for a 12-yard gain. On the play after it, he tossed it to Anderson to pick up nine yards.

Back in the huddle, Mercein, a Yale grad, whispered to Starr that Dallas' outside linebackers were playing off him.

"It was almost as though they were [in] a prevent defense and wanted to have everything caught in front of them."

A short Starr-to-Mercein toss to the left side gained 19 yards. There was 1:11 left and the Packers had a first down at the Dallas 11-yard line.

All week, Lombardi and Starr discussed using what they called "a sucker play" to trap Cowboys All-Pro defensive tackle Bob Lilly. It was a play where the guard in front of Lilly pulled right and the left halfback followed in the same direction, giving it the appearance of Lombardi's power sweep. But instead of the sweep, Starr handed the ball to Mercein as he cut behind him and shot through the vacated hole over left guard.

Lombardi had advised Starr to save the play for a critical moment, and the QB had patiently waited almost 59 minutes to call it. Mercein gained eight yards to the 3.

"Bart says it's the best call he ever made in his career," Mercein says. "Very unusual. Very heads up. That's not going to work more than once."

Anderson then carried the ball to the 1-yard line, picking up a first down, but was stopped for no gain on back-to-back plays when he couldn't get his footing on the ice-covered turf.

Sixteen seconds remained when the Packers called their final timeout. Starr headed to the sideline to consult with Lombardi with one thought in mind. Although he almost never ran one, Starr suggested a quarterback sneak, not wanting to risk having one of his backs slip again.

The ever-decisive Lombardi agreed.

"All he said was, 'Then run it and let's get the hell out of here,'" Starr recalled years later. "Those were his exact words. I'm chuckling as I ran back [onto the field]."

Encircled with his teammates, Starr didn't share his plan. He called "Brown right, 31 wedge," a handoff to the fullback who was to hit the gap between the center and right guard. Instead, Starr kept the ball and leaned into the same hole, falling forward.

Right guard Jerry Kramer got a great jump and instantly gained leverage on 6-foot-6 defensive tackle Jethro Pugh. Center Ken Bowman's assignment was to double-team Pugh and he, too, perfectly executed his block, driving upward into Pugh's chest.

The crease was wide enough for Starr to not only put the ball across the goal line, but for his head and shoulders to clear it as well.

"I can't believe that call, the sneak," Dallas coach Tom Landry said after the game. "It wasn't a good call, but now it's a great call."

Dallas still had time to run two plays, but to no avail. The final: Green Bay 21, Dallas 17.

With the victory, the Packers claimed their third straight NFL championship, something no other team had accomplished since postseason play was introduced in 1933. Two weeks after the Ice Bowl, Green Bay beat Oakland, 32-14, in Super Bowl II. But that was viewed as nothing more than icing on the cake.

It was also the end of an era. Less than a month after the Super Bowl, Lombardi stepped down as coach. He stayed on as general manager for a year, coached Washington for a season, and died of colon cancer on Sept. 3, 1970, at age 57. A week later, NFL Commissioner Pete Rozelle changed the name of the Super Bowl trophy to the Vince Lombardi Trophy.

The Packers would have to wait more than a quarter-century before winning another Super Bowl. Meanwhile, the Cowboys, who also lost to Green Bay in the final minute of the 1966 NFL Championship Game, suffered another close defeat in Super Bowl V before winning Super Bowl VI for their first league title. They've won four more since.

The Cowboys are called "America's Team" and wear the nickname proudly, while the Packers are equally proud of their NFL-record 13 championships, four more than any other franchise. But it is the Ice Bowl – more than their legacies or any perceived rivalry between Dallas and Green Bay – that inextricably links the two franchises.

***Cliff Christl** is the official historian of the Green Bay Packers. A native of Green Bay, he attended the Ice Bowl as a 20-year-old college student and then spent more than 35 years working as a sportswriter for four Wisconsin newspapers.*

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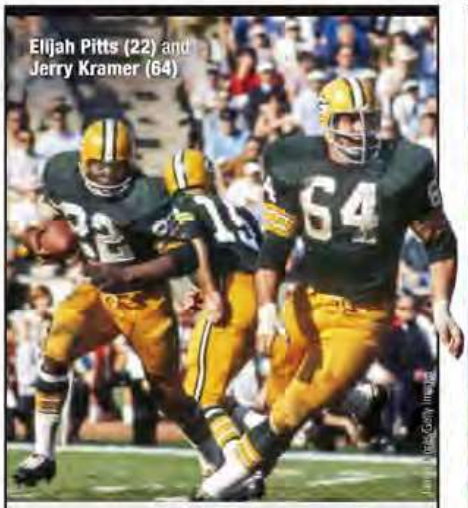
A REVIEW OF THE **FIRST 51 SUPER BOWLS** AND THE TEAMS THAT CAPTURED PRO FOOTBALL'S ULTIMATE SYMBOL OF ACHIEVEMENT.

RING LEADERS

Kevin C. Cox/Getty Images.


Elijah Pitts (22) and Jerry Kramer (64)

SUPER BOWL I — JANUARY 15, 1967

Green Bay Packers 35
Kansas City Chiefs 10

Attendance: 61,946

MVP: Bart Starr (QB), Packers
16 of 23 passing, 250 yards, 2 TDs

How They Got There: Green Bay – d. Dallas, 34-27 (NFL Championship). Kansas City – d. Buffalo, 31-7 (AFL Championship).

The Packers opened the Super Bowl era by defeating the AFL champion Chiefs behind the passing of Bart Starr, the receiving of Max McGee, and a key interception by All-Pro safety Willie Wood. Leading by a narrow 14-10 margin at the half, Green Bay took control with three second-half touchdowns, the first of which was set up by Wood's 50-yard interception return. McGee, filling in for an ailing Boyd Dowler after having only four receptions all season, caught seven passes from Starr for 138 yards and two touchdowns. Elijah Pitts ran for two other Packers scores. All of the Chiefs' points came in the second quarter, including a seven-yard TD pass from Len Dawson to Curtis McClinton.

MEMORIAL COLISEUM
Los Angeles, Calif.

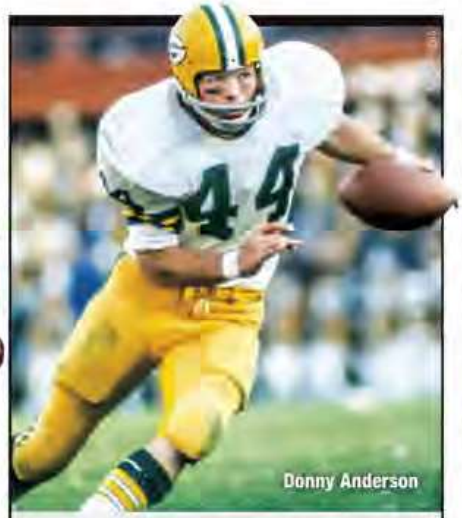
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Kansas City	0	10	0	0	10
Green Bay	7	7	14	7	35

1st Quarter
GB McGee 37 pass from Starr (Chandler kick), 8:56

2nd Quarter
KC McClinton 7 pass from Dawson (Mercer kick), 4:20
GB Taylor 14 run (Chandler kick), 10:23
KC Mercer 31 FG, 14:06

3rd Quarter
GB Pitts 5 run (Chandler kick), 2:27
GB McGee 13 pass from Starr (Chandler kick), 14:09

4th Quarter
GB Pitts 1 run (Chandler kick), 8:25


Donny Anderson

SUPER BOWL II — JANUARY 14, 1968

Green Bay Packers 33
Oakland Raiders 14

Attendance: 75,546

MVP: Bart Starr (QB), Packers
13 of 24 passing, 202 yards, 1 TD

How They Got There: Green Bay – d. L.A. Rams, 28-7; d. Dallas, 21-17 (NFL Championship). Oakland – d. Houston Oilers, 40-7 (AFL Championship).

Two weeks after capturing its third consecutive NFL championship, Green Bay won the Super Bowl title for the second straight year, defeating the Raiders in a game that drew the first $3 million gate in football history. Bart Starr directed an attack that built a 16-7 halftime lead and pulled away after intermission. Don Chandler kicked four field goals for the victors and All-Pro cornerback Herb Adderley capped the Green Bay scoring with his 60-yard interception-return TD. The game marked the last for Vince Lombardi as Packers coach, ending a tenure that saw him win five NFL titles and two Super Bowls.

ORANGE BOWL
Miami, Fla.

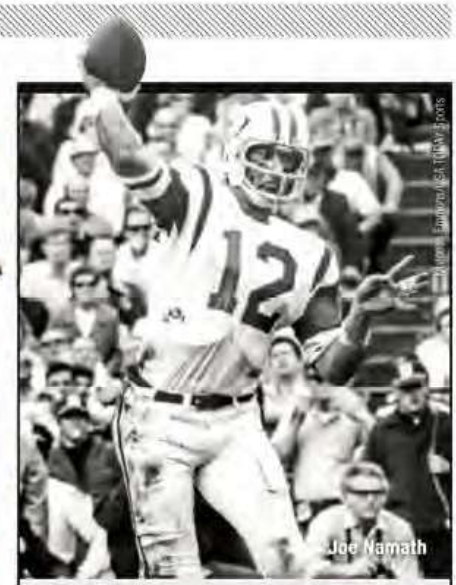
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Green Bay	3	13	10	7	33
Oakland	0	7	0	7	14

1st Quarter
GB Chandler 39 FG, 5:07

2nd Quarter
GB Chandler 20 FG, 3:08
GB Dowler 62 pass from Starr (Chandler kick), 4:10
OAK Miller 23 pass from Lamonica (Blanda kick), 8:45
GB Chandler 43 FG, 14:59

3rd Quarter
GB Anderson 2 run (Chandler kick), 9:06
GB Chandler 31 FG, 14:58

4th Quarter
GB Adderley 60 interception return (Chandler kick), 3:57
OAK Miller 23 pass from Lamonica (Blanda kick), 5:47


Joe Namath

SUPER BOWL III — JANUARY 12, 1969

New York Jets 16
Baltimore Colts 7

Attendance: 75,389

MVP: Joe Namath (QB), Jets
17 of 28 passing, 206 yards

How They Got There: New York – d. Oakland, 27-23 (AFL Championship). Baltimore – d. Minnesota, 24-14; d. Cleveland, 34-0 (NFL Championship).

Jets quarterback Joe Namath "guaranteed" victory on the Thursday before the game, then went out and led the AFL to its first Super Bowl win – beating a Baltimore team that had lost only once all season. Namath directed a steady attack that dominated the NFL champions after the Jets' defense had intercepted Colts quarterback Earl Morrall three times in the first half. New York had 337 total yards, including 121 on the ground from Matt Snell. Johnny Unitas, who missed most of the season with a sore elbow, came off the bench to lead Baltimore to its only touchdown late in the fourth quarter.

ORANGE BOWL
Miami, Fla.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
New York Jets	0	7	6	3	16
Baltimore	0	0	0	7	7

2nd Quarter
NYJ Snell 4 run (J. Turner kick), 5:57

3rd Quarter
NYJ J. Turner 32 FG, 4:52
NYJ J. Turner 30 FG, 11:02

4th Quarter
NYJ J. Turner 9 FG, 1:34
BAL Hill 1 run (Michaels kick), 11:41

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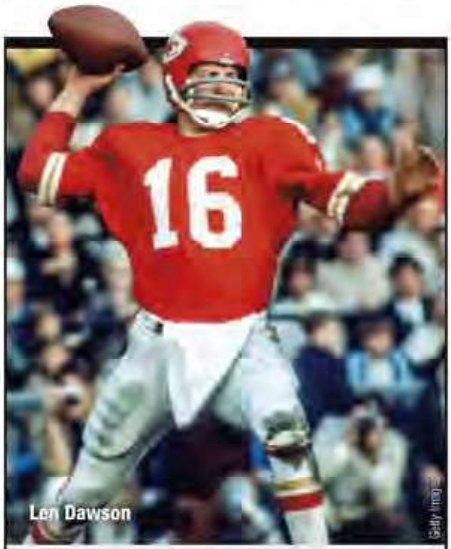

Len Dawson

SUPER BOWL IV — JANUARY 11, 1970

Kansas City Chiefs 23
Minnesota Vikings 7

Attendance: 80,562

MVP: Len Dawson (QB), Chiefs
12 of 17 passing, 142 yards, 1 TD

How They Got There: Kansas City – d. N.Y. Jets, 13-6; d. Oakland, 17-7 (AFL Championship). Minnesota – d. L.A. Rams, 23-20; d. Cleveland, 27-7 (NFL Championship).

The AFL squared the Super Bowl series at two victories apiece behind Len Dawson's superb quarterbacking and a powerful defense. Dawson called an almost flawless game and hit Otis Taylor on a 46-yard play for the Chiefs' final touchdown, minutes after the Vikings scored their only points. The Kansas City defense limited Minnesota's strong rushing game to 67 yards and forced five turnovers (three interceptions and two lost fumbles). Jan Stenerud provided an early spark for the Chiefs with field goals from 48, 32, and 25 yards, while Mike Garrett's five-yard TD run before halftime made it 16-0.

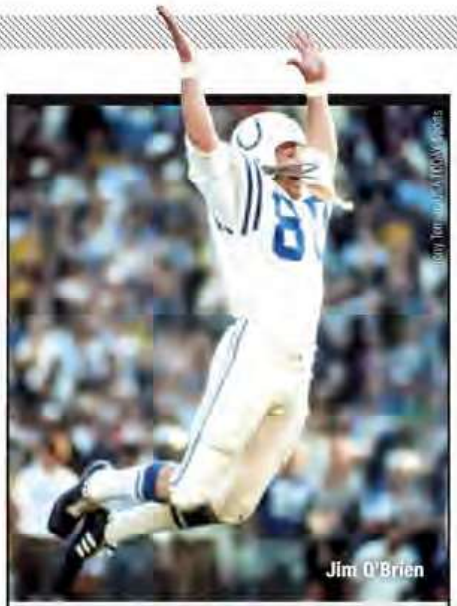
TULANE STADIUM
New Orleans, La.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Minnesota	0	0	7	0	7
Kansas City	3	13	7	0	23

1st Quarter
KC Stenerud 48 FG, 8:08

2nd Quarter
KC Stenerud 32 FG, 1:40
KC Stenerud 25 FG, 7:08
KC Garrett 5 run (Stenerud kick), 9:26

3rd Quarter
MIN Osborn 4 run (Cox kick), 10:28
KC Taylor 46 pass from Dawson (Stenerud kick), 13:38


Jim O'Brien

SUPER BOWL V — JANUARY 17, 1971

Baltimore Colts 16
Dallas Cowboys 13

Attendance: 79,204

MVP: Chuck Howley (LB), Cowboys
2 interceptions, 3 tackles

How They Got There: Baltimore – d. Cincinnati, 17-0; d. Oakland, 27-17 (AFC Championship). Dallas – d. Detroit, 5-0; d. San Francisco, 17-10 (NFC Championship).

A 32-yard field goal by rookie kicker Jim O'Brien brought the Colts to victory in the closing seconds of Super Bowl V, the first time the game was played on artificial turf. Dallas led, 13-6, at the half, but interceptions by Rick Volk and Mike Curtis set up a Baltimore touchdown and O'Brien's decisive kick. Johnny Unitas passed for the Colts' only touchdown – a throw that caromed off receiver Eddie Hinton's fingertips, off Dallas' Mel Renfro, and settled into the grasp of John Mackey, who scored on the 75-yard play. The Cowboys' Chuck Howley became the first defensive player and the first (and still only) player from a losing team to be named Super Bowl MVP.

ORANGE BOWL
Miami, Fla.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Baltimore	0	6	0	10	16
Dallas	3	10	0	0	13

1st Quarter
DAL Clark 14 FG, 9:28

2nd Quarter
DAL Clark 30 FG, 0:08
BAL Mackey 75 pass from Unitas (kick blocked), 0:50
DAL Thomas 7 pass from Morton (Clark kick), 7:07

4th Quarter
BAL Nowatzke 2 run (O'Brien kick), 7:25
BAL O'Brien 32 FG, 14:55

Duane Thomas

SUPER BOWL VI — JANUARY 16, 1972

Dallas Cowboys 24
Miami Dolphins 3

Attendance: 81,023

MVP: Roger Staubach (QB), Cowboys
12 of 19 passing, 119 yards, 2 TDs

How They Got There: Dallas – d. Minnesota, 20-12; d. San Francisco, 14-3 (NFC Championship). Miami – d. Kansas City, 27-24 in OT; d. Baltimore Colts, 21-0 (AFC Championship).

The Cowboys rushed for 252 yards and their defense limited the Dolphins to just 185 total yards as they became the first team to not allow a touchdown in the Super Bowl. Chuck Howley's recovery of a Larry Csonka fumble led to a 3-0 Dallas advantage, and a Roger Staubach TD pass to Lance Alworth helped make it 10-3 at the break. After the Cowboys received the second-half kickoff, Duane Thomas keyed a 71-yard march that ended with his three-yard scoring run. Early in the fourth quarter, Howley picked off a pass that he returned to the Miami 9, and three plays later Roger Staubach passed seven yards to Mike Ditka for the game's final TD. Thomas finished with 95 rushing yards and Walt Garrison added 74 in the win.

TULANE STADIUM
New Orleans, La.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Dallas	3	7	7	7	24
Miami	0	3	0	0	3

1st Quarter
DAL Clark 9 FG, 13:37

2nd Quarter
DAL Alworth 7 pass from Staubach (Clark kick), 13:45
MIA Yepremian 31 FG, 14:56

3rd Quarter
DAL D. Thomas 3 run (Clark kick), 5:17

4th Quarter
DAL Ditka 7 pass from Staubach (Clark kick), 3:18

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Bob Griese (12)

SUPER BOWL VII — JANUARY 14, 1973

Miami Dolphins 14
Washington Redskins 7

Attendance: 90,182

MVP: Jake Scott (S), Dolphins
2 interceptions

How They Got There: Miami – d. Cleveland, 20-14; d. Pittsburgh, 21-17 (AFC Championship). Washington – d. Green Bay, 16-3; d. Dallas, 26-3 (NFC Championship).

On their way to perfection, the Dolphins played virtually perfect football in the first half against the Redskins. Their defense allowed Washington to cross midfield only once and their offense turned good field position into two touchdowns. Miami drove 63 yards for its first score, a 28-yard pass from Bob Griese to Howard Twilley. After the Redskins reached the Miami 48 late in the first half, linebacker Nick Buoniconti intercepted a pass that he returned 25 yards. Five plays later, just 18 seconds before intermission, Jim Kiick scored on a one-yard run. Dolphins safety Jake Scott had two interceptions, one in the end zone that ended a Redskins threat.

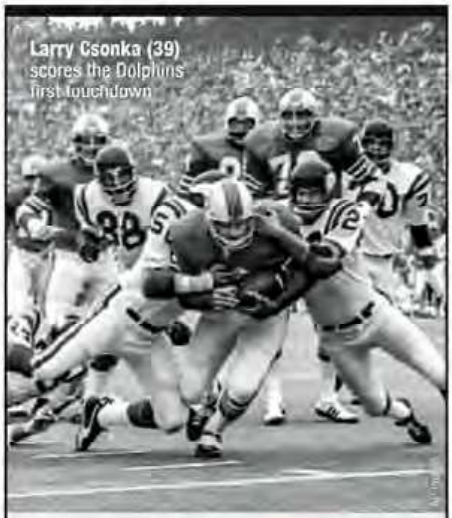
MEMORIAL COLISEUM
Los Angeles, Calif.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Miami	7	7	0	0	14
Washington	0	0	0	7	7

1st Quarter
MIA Twilley 28 pass from Griese (Yepremian kick),14:59

2nd Quarter
MIA Kiick 1 run (Yepremian kick), 14:42

4th Quarter
WAS Bass 49 fumble return (Knight kick), 12:53


Larry Csonka (39) scores the Dolphins first touchdown

SUPER BOWL VIII — JANUARY 13, 1974

Miami Dolphins 24
Minnesota Vikings 7

Attendance: 71,882

MVP: Larry Csonka (RB), Dolphins
33 carries, 145 yards, 2 TDs

How They Got There: Miami – d. Cincinnati, 34-16; d. Oakland, 27-10 (AFC Championship). Minnesota – d. Washington, 27-20; d. Dallas, 27-10 (NFC Championship).

The Dolphins, representing the AFC for the third straight year, scored the first two times they had the ball – on marches of 62 and 56 yards – while their defense limited Minnesota to only seven plays in the first quarter. Larry Csonka capped the initial 10-play drive with his five-yard TD bolt through right guard, and another 10-play scoring drive ended with Jim Kiick bursting one yard through the middle. Garo Yepremian's 28-yard field goal made it 17-0. The Vikings would then drive deep into Miami territory, but were stopped on fourth-and-1 from the 6 on a big hit by middle linebacker Nick Buoniconti.

RICE STADIUM
Houston, Texas

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Minnesota	0	0	0	7	7
Miami	14	3	7	0	24

1st Quarter
MIA Csonka 5 run (Yepremian kick), 5:27
MIA Kiick 1 run (Yepremian kick), 13:38

2nd Quarter
MIA Yepremian 28 FG, 8:58

3rd Quarter
MIA Csonka 2 run (Yepremian kick), 6:16

4th Quarter
MIN Tarkenton 4 run (Cox kick), 1:35

Chuck Noll

SUPER BOWL IX — JANUARY 12, 1975

Pittsburgh Steelers 16
Minnesota Vikings 6

Attendance: 80,997

MVP: Franco Harris (RB), Steelers
34 carries, 158 yards, 1 TD

How They Got There: Pittsburgh – d. Buffalo, 32-14; d. Oakland, 24-13 (AFC Championship). Minnesota – d. St. Louis Cardinals, 30-14; d. L.A. Rams, 14-10 (NFC Championship).

Pittsburgh's football history began a new chapter when the Steelers defeated the Vikings, the first of four Super Bowl titles won under coach Chuck Noll. The teams struggled through a first half that saw the only points produced when Pittsburgh's Dwight White downed quarterback Fran Tarkenton in the end zone for a safety. But it didn't take long for the Steelers to add to that lead after intermission. Minnesota's Bill Brown fumbled the second-half kickoff and Marv Kellum recovered on the Vikings 30. Four plays later, Franco Harris' nine-yard touchdown run gave his team a 9-0 lead. Pittsburgh's powerful defense permitted only 119 yards on the day, including 17 rushing yards.

TULANE STADIUM
New Orleans, La.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Pittsburgh	0	2	7	7	16
Minnesota	0	0	0	6	6

2nd Quarter
PIT Safety White 0, 7:49

3rd Quarter
PIT Harris 9 run (Gerela kick), 1:35

4th Quarter
MIN T. Brown 0 blocked punt return (kick failed), 4:27
PIT Brown 4 pass from Bradshaw (Gerela kick),11:29

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Franco Harris

SUPER BOWL X — JANUARY 18, 1976

Pittsburgh Steelers	21
Dallas Cowboys	17

Attendance: 80,187

MVP: Lynn Swann (WR), Steelers
4 receptions, 161 yards, 1 TD

How They Got There: Pittsburgh – d. Baltimore Colts, 28-10; d. Oakland, 16-10 (AFC Championship). Dallas – d. Minnesota, 17-14; d. L.A. Rams, 37-7 (NFC Championship).

Pittsburgh captured the Super Bowl for the second straight year, helped along by Terry Bradshaw's 64-yard touchdown pass to Lynn Swann and an aggressive defense that snuffed out a late Dallas rally. The Steelers scored on Bradshaw's seven-yard TD pass to Randy Grossman and the long bomb to Swann, Roy Gerela's 36- and 18-yard field goals, and Reggie Harrison's blocked punt that went through the end zone for a safety. Dallas still only trailed by four when it took possession with 1:22 to go, but had its hopes dashed on Glen Edwards' end-zone interception on the game's final play.

ORANGE BOWL
Miami, Fla.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Dallas	7	3	0	7	17
Pittsburgh	7	0	0	14	21

1st Quarter
DAL D. Pearson 29 pass from Staubach (Fritsch kick), 4:36
PIT Grossman 7 pass from Bradshaw (Gerela kick), 9:03

2nd Quarter
DAL Fritsch 36 FG, 0:15

4th Quarter
PIT Safety Harrison 0, 3:32
PIT Gerela 36 FG, 6:19
PIT Gerela 18 FG, 8:23
PIT Swann 64 pass from Bradshaw (kick failed), 11:58
DAL P. Howard 34 pass from Staubach (Fritsch kick), 13:12

Willie Brown

SUPER BOWL XI — JANUARY 9, 1977

Oakland Raiders	32
Minnesota Vikings	14

Attendance: 103,438

MVP: Fred Biletnikoff (WR), Raiders
4 receptions, 79 yards

How They Got There: Oakland – d. New England, 24-21; d. Pittsburgh, 24-7 (AFC Championship). Minnesota – d. Washington, 35-20; d. L.A. Rams, 24-13 (NFC Championship).

In front of 81 million television viewers, the largest audience ever to watch a sporting event, the Raiders won their first Super Bowl title. Clarence Davis rushed for 137 yards, Fred Biletnikoff made four key receptions, and the defense came up big for the victors. Oakland built a 16-0 halftime lead – on Errol Mann's 24-yard field goal, a one-yard TD pass from Ken Stabler to Dave Casper, and Pete Banaszak's one-yard scoring run. After the Vikings cut the deficit to 19-7, a pair of fourth-quarter interceptions clinched the championship for the Raiders. One set up Banaszak's second touchdown run, while the other resulted in cornerback Willie Brown's 75-yard interception return for a score.

ROSE BOWL
Pasadena, Calif.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Oakland	0	16	3	13	32
Minnesota	0	0	7	7	14

2nd Quarter
OAK Mann 24 FG, 0:48
OAK Casper 1 pass from Stabler (Mann kick), 7:50
OAK Banaszak 1 run (kick failed),11:27

3rd Quarter
OAK Mann 40 FG, 9:44
MIN S. White 8 pass from Tarkenton (Cox kick), 14:13

4th Quarter
OAK Banaszak 2 run (Mann kick), 7:21
OAK Brown 75 interception return (kick failed), 9:17
MIN Voigt 13 pass from Lee (Cox kick), 14:35

Butch Johnson

SUPER BOWL XII — JANUARY 15, 1978

Dallas Cowboys	27
Denver Broncos	10

Attendance: 75,583

MVPs: Randy White (DT) and Harvey Martin (DE), Cowboys
Leaders of a defense that had four sacks and allowed just 156 total yards

How They Got There: Dallas – d. Chicago, 37-7; d. Minnesota, 23-6 (NFC Championship). Denver – d. Pittsburgh, 34-21; d. Oakland, 20-17 (AFC Championship).

Super Bowl TV viewership exceeded 100 million for the first time, and those fans saw Dallas turn two interceptions into 10 points and Efren Herrera kick a 35-yard field goal for a 13-0 halftime lead. The Cowboys then tacked on two second-half TDs, the first on Butch Johnson's spectacular diving catch in the end zone and the other when running back Robert Newhouse tossed a 29-yard pass to Golden Richards. Dallas' defense forced eight turnovers in the win.

SUPERDOME
New Orleans, La.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Dallas	10	3	7	7	27
Denver	0	0	10	0	10

1st Quarter
DAL Dorsett 3 run (Herrera kick), 10:31
DAL Herrera 35 FG, 13:29

2nd Quarter
DAL Herrera 43 FG, 3:44

3rd Quarter
DEN Turner 47 FG, 2:28
DAL Johnson 45 pass from Staubach (Herrera kick), 8:01
DEN Lytle 1 run (Turner kick), 9:21

4th Quarter
DAL Richards 29 pass from Newhouse (Herrera kick), 7:56

John Stallworth

SUPER BOWL XIII — JANUARY 21, 1979

Pittsburgh Steelers 35
Dallas Cowboys 31

Attendance: 79,484

MVP: Terry Bradshaw (QB), Steelers
17 of 30 passing, 318 yards, 4 TDs

How They Got There: Pittsburgh – d. Denver, 33-10; d. Houston Oilers, 34-5 (AFC Championship). Dallas – d. Atlanta, 27-20; d. L.A. Rams, 28-0 (NFC Championship).

Terry Bradshaw's four touchdown passes led the Steelers, who became the first team to win three Super Bowls. The first two scoring tosses went to John Stallworth, and the third, with 26 seconds remaining in the second period, was to Rocky Bleier for a 21-14 halftime lead. The Steelers then broke things open with TDs 19 seconds apart midway through the final period – Franco Harris rambled 22 yards for a score, and after Dennis Winston recovered a fumble on the ensuing kickoff, Bradshaw fired an 18-yard strike to Lynn Swann.

ORANGE BOWL
Miami, Fla.

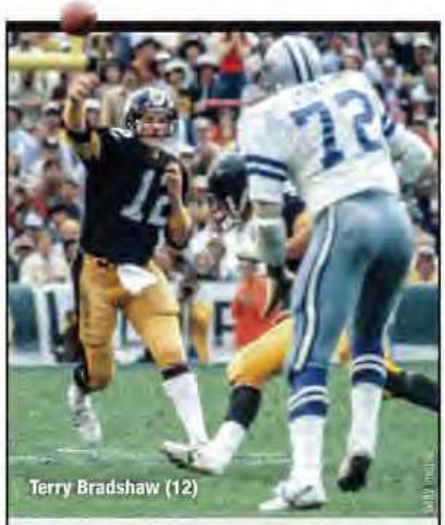
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Pittsburgh	7	14	0	14	35
Dallas	7	7	3	14	31

1st Quarter
PIT Stallworth 28 pass from Bradshaw (Gerela kick), 5:13
DAL Hill 39 pass from Staubach (Septien kick), 15:00

2nd Quarter
DAL Hegman 37 fumble return (Septien kick), 2:52
PIT Stallworth 75 pass from Bradshaw (Gerela kick), 4:35
PIT Bleier 7 pass from Bradshaw (Gerela kick), 14:34

3rd Quarter
DAL Septien 27 FG, 12:24

4th Quarter
PIT Harris 22 run (Gerela kick), 7:50
PIT Swann 18 pass from Bradshaw (Gerela kick), 8:09
DAL DuPree 7 pass from Staubach (Septien kick), 12:33
DAL Johnson 4 pass from Staubach (Septien kick), 14:38


Terry Bradshaw (12)

SUPER BOWL XIV — JANUARY 20, 1980

Pittsburgh Steelers 31
Los Angeles Rams 19

Attendance: 103,985

MVP: Terry Bradshaw (QB), Steelers
14 of 21 passing, 309 yards, 2 TDs

How They Got There: Pittsburgh – d. Miami, 34-14; d. Houston Oilers, 27-13 (AFC Championship). Los Angeles – d. Dallas, 21-19; d. Tampa Bay, 9-0 (NFC Championship).

Trailing 13-10 at halftime, the Steelers rallied to win their fourth Super Bowl crown in six years. They briefly moved ahead in the third quarter when Terry Bradshaw hit Lynn Swann on a 47-yard TD pass, but the Rams responded on their next possession with Lawrence McCutcheon throwing a halfback option touchdown to Ron Smith. The Steelers would finally go ahead to stay in the fourth quarter on Bradshaw's 73-yard touchdown throw to John Stallworth. After stopping an L.A. threat with a Jack Lambert interception, they sealed the verdict on Franco Harris' one-yard TD run.

ROSE BOWL
Pasadena, Calif.

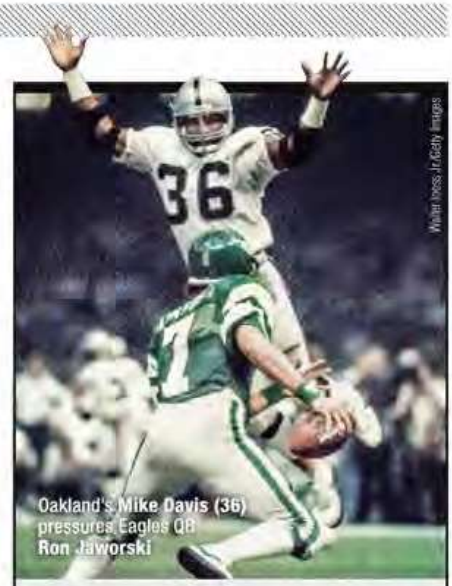
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Los Angeles Rams	7	6	6	0	19
Pittsburgh	3	7	7	14	31

1st Quarter
PIT Bahr 41 FG, 7:29
LA Bryant 1 run (Corral kick), 12:16

2nd Quarter
PIT Harris 1 run (Bahr kick), 2:08
LA Corral 31 FG, 7:39
LA Corral 45 FG, 14:46

3rd Quarter
PIT Swann 47 pass from Bradshaw (Bahr kick), 2:48
LA R. Smith 24 pass from McCutcheon (kick failed), 4:45

4th Quarter
PIT Stallworth 73 pass from Bradshaw (Bahr kick), 2:56
PIT Harris 1 run (Bahr kick), 13:11


Oakland's Mike Davis (36) pressures Eagles QB Ron Jaworski

SUPER BOWL XV — JANUARY 25, 1981

Oakland Raiders 27
Philadelphia Eagles 10

Attendance: 76,135

MVP: Jim Plunkett (QB), Raiders
13 of 21 passing, 261 yards, 3 TDs

How They Got There: Oakland – d. Houston Oilers, 27-7; d. Cleveland, 14-12; d. San Diego Chargers, 34-27 (AFC Championship). Philadelphia – d. Minnesota, 31-16; d. Dallas, 20-7 (NFC Championship).

Jim Plunkett passed for three touchdowns, including an 80-yard strike to Kenny King late in the first quarter, as the Raiders became the first wild card team to win the Super Bowl. Linebacker Rod Martin set up Oakland's first touchdown with an interception, one of a Super Bowl-record three he had in the game, while King's grab marked the longest play in Super Bowl history at the time. Oakland's Mark van Eeghen led all rushers with 75 yards, while teammate Cliff Branch had five receptions for 67 yards, including two catches that went for touchdowns.

SUPERDOME
New Orleans, La.

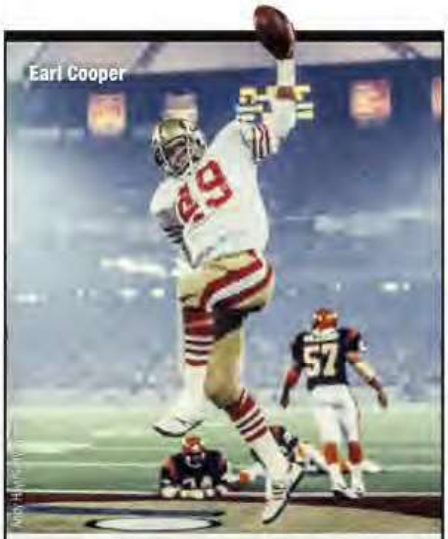
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Oakland	14	0	10	3	27
Philadelphia	0	3	0	7	10

1st Quarter
OAK Branch 2 pass from Plunkett (Bahr kick), 6:04
OAK King 80 pass from Plunkett (Bahr kick), 14:51

2nd Quarter
PHI Franklin 30 FG, 4:32

3rd Quarter
OAK Branch 29 pass from Plunkett (Bahr kick), 2:36
OAK Bahr 46 FG, 10:25

4th Quarter
PHI Krepfle 8 pass from Jaworski (Franklin kick), 1:01
OAK Bahr 35 FG, 6:31


Earl Cooper

SUPER BOWL XVI — JANUARY 24, 1982

San Francisco 49ers 26
Cincinnati Bengals 21

Attendance: 81,270

MVP: Joe Montana (QB), 49ers
14 of 22 passing, 157 yards, 1 TD

How They Got There: San Francisco – d. N.Y. Giants, 38-24; d. Dallas, 28-27 (NFC Championship). Cincinnati – d. Buffalo, 28-21; d. San Diego Chargers, 27-7 (AFC Championship).

Ray Wersching's Super Bowl record-tying four field goals and Joe Montana's controlled passing lifted the 49ers to their first NFL championship. San Francisco took a 20-0 halftime lead via Montana's one-yard TD run, Earl Cooper's 11-yard scoring catch, and 22- and 26-yard field goals from Wersching. The Bengals closed the gap on Ken Anderson's five-yard run and Dan Ross' four-yard TD grab, but the 49ers' kicker padded the lead with two fourth-quarter field goals. Cincinnati outgained San Francisco, 356-275, making it the first time in Super Bowl history that the losing team had more total yards.

SILVERDOME
Pontiac, Mich.

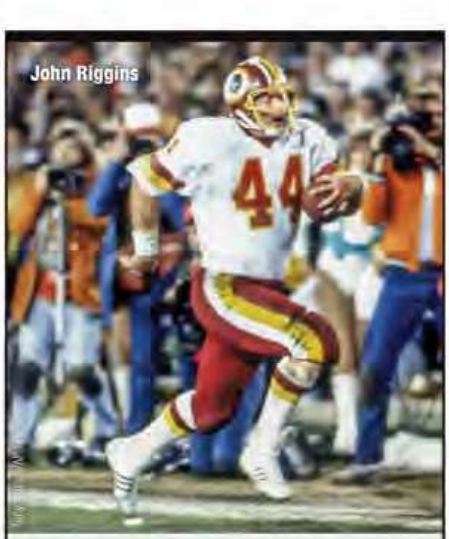
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
San Francisco	7	13	0	6	26
Cincinnati	0	0	7	14	21

1st Quarter
SF Montana 1 run (Wersching kick), 9:08

2nd Quarter
SF E. Cooper 11 pass from Montana (Wersching kick), 8:07
SF Wersching 22 FG, 14:45
SF Wersching 26 FG, 14:58

3rd Quarter
CIN Anderson 5 run (Breech kick), 3:35

4th Quarter
CIN Ross 4 pass from Anderson (Breech kick), 4:54
SF Wersching 40 FG, 9:35
SF Wersching 23 FG, 13:03
CIN Ross 3 pass from Anderson (Breech kick), 14:44


John Riggins

SUPER BOWL XVII — JANUARY 30, 1983

Washington Redskins 27
Miami Dolphins 17

Attendance: 103,667

MVP: John Riggins (RB), Redskins
38 carries, 166 yards, 1 TD

How They Got There: Washington – d. Detroit, 31-7; d. Minnesota, 21-7; d. Dallas, 31-17 (NFC Championship). Miami – d. New England, 28-13; d. San Diego Chargers, 34-13; d. N.Y. Jets, 14-0 (AFC Championship).

John Riggins topped 100 rushing yards for the fourth straight playoff game, part of a 276-yard ground effort for the Redskins, who won their first NFL title since 1942. The Dolphins held a 17-10 halftime lead, but wouldn't score again. Mark Moseley's short field goal pulled Washington within three, and Riggins moved his team ahead when he rambled 43 yards on a fourth-and-1 play early in the fourth quarter. Charlie Brown's six-yard TD catch with 1:55 left closed out the scoring. The Dolphins managed only 176 total yards of offense, and just 34 after intermission.

ROSE BOWL
Pasadena, Calif.

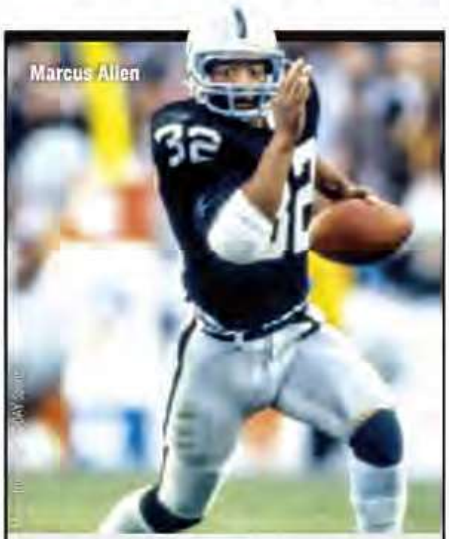
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Miami	7	10	0	0	17
Washington	0	10	3	14	27

1st Quarter
MIA Cefalo 76 pass from Woodley (Von Schamann kick), 6:49

2nd Quarter
WAS Moseley 31 FG, 0:21
MIA Von Schamann 20 FG, 9:00
WAS Garrett 4 pass from Theismann (Moseley kick), 13:09
MIA Walker 98 kickoff return (Von Schamann kick), 13:22

3rd Quarter
WAS Moseley 20 FG, 6:51

4th Quarter
WAS Riggins 43 run (Moseley kick), 4:59
WAS Brown 6 pass from Theismann (Moseley kick), 13:05


Marcus Allen

SUPER BOWL XVIII — JANUARY 22, 1984

Los Angeles Raiders 38
Washington Redskins 9

Attendance: 72,920

MVP: Marcus Allen (RB), Raiders
20 carries, 191 yards, 2 TDs

How They Got There: Los Angeles – d. Pittsburgh, 38-10; d. Seattle, 30-14 (AFC Championship). Washington – d. L.A. Rams, 51-7; d. San Francisco, 24-21 (NFC Championship).

Derrick Jensen's end zone recovery of a punt he blocked – giving his team a 7-0 lead less than five minutes into the game – put the Raiders on course for a one-sided victory. Two key plays sealed Washington's fate. With just seven seconds left in the first half, Raiders linebacker Jack Squirek intercepted a pass at the Redskins 5-yard line that he ran in for a touchdown to give Los Angeles a 21-3 lead. Then, on the final play of the third quarter, game MVP Marcus Allen darted 74 yards for a backbreaking score.

TAMPA STADIUM
Tampa, Fla.

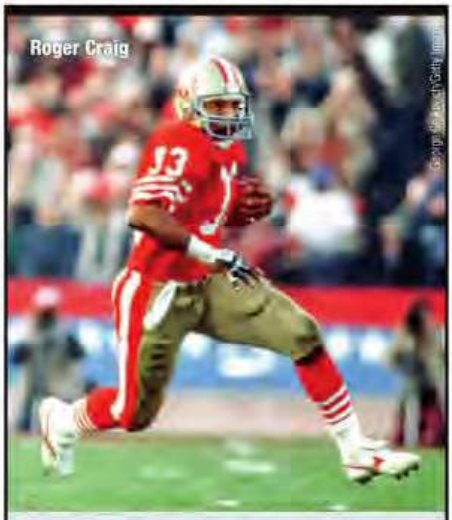
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Washington	0	3	6	0	9
Los Angeles Raiders	7	14	14	3	38

1st Quarter
LA Jensen 0 blocked punt return (Bahr kick), 4:52

2nd Quarter
LA Branch 12 pass from Plunkett (Bahr kick), 5:46
WAS Moseley 24 FG, 11:55
LA Squirek 5 interception return (Bahr kick), 14:53

3rd Quarter
WAS Riggins 1 run (kick blocked), 4:08
LA Allen 5 run (Bahr kick), 7:54
LA Allen 74 run (Bahr kick), 15:00

4th Quarter
LA Bahr 21 FG, 12:36


Roger Craig

SUPER BOWL XIX — JANUARY 20, 1985

San Francisco 49ers	38
Miami Dolphins	16

Attendance: 84,059

MVP: Joe Montana (QB), 49ers
24 of 35 passing, 331 yards, 3 TDs

How They Got There: San Francisco – d. N.Y. Giants, 21-10; d. Chicago, 23-0 (NFC Championship). Miami – d. Seattle, 31-10; d. Pittsburgh, 45-28 (AFC Championship).

San Francisco piled up 537 net yards as Joe Montana outdueled Dan Marino in this battle of future Hall of Fame QBs. Roger Craig became the first player to score three TDs in a Super Bowl game, one of those an eight-yard TD reception that gave the 49ers a lead they would never relinquish. He added a short touchdown run before halftime and would close out San Francisco's scoring with a 16-yard reception from Montana. Craig finished with 58 yards rushing and caught seven passes for another 77 yards. The 49ers also held a 37:11 to 22:49 time of possession advantage over the Dolphins.

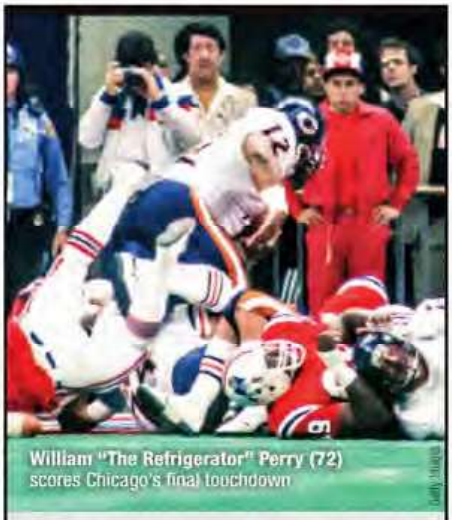
STANFORD STADIUM
Stanford, Calif.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Miami	10	6	0	0	16
San Francisco	7	21	10	0	38

1st Quarter
MIA Von Schamann 37 FG, 7:36
SF Monroe 33 pass from Montana (Wersching kick), 11:48
MIA D. Johnson 2 pass from Marino (Von Schamann kick), 14:15

2nd Quarter
SF Craig 8 pass from Montana (Wersching kick), 3:26
SF Montana 6 run (Wersching kick), 8:02
SF Craig 2 run (Wersching kick), 12:55
MIA Von Schamann 31 FG, 14:48
MIA Von Schamann 30 FG, 15:00

3rd Quarter
SF Wersching 27 FG, 4:48
SF Craig 16 pass from Montana (Wersching kick), 8:42


William "The Refrigerator" Perry (72) scores Chicago's final touchdown

SUPER BOWL XX — JANUARY 26, 1986

Chicago Bears	46
New England Patriots	10

Attendance: 73,818

MVP: Richard Dent (DE), Bears
1.5 sacks, defense allowed 7 rushing yards

How They Got There: Chicago – d. N.Y. Giants, 21-0; d. L.A. Rams, 24-0 (NFC Championship). New England – d. N.Y. Jets, 26-14; d. L.A. Raiders, 27-20; d. Miami, 31-14 (AFC Championship).

In a dominating display from start to finish, the Bears' league-leading defense recorded seven sacks and limited the Patriots to just seven rushing yards. After yielding an early field goal, Chicago scored the game's next 44 points. QB Jim McMahon and Matt Suhey had scoring runs, and Kevin Butler kicked three field goals, to give the Bears a 23-3 halftime lead. After forcing a Patriots punt to start the second half, Chicago marched 96 yards for another TD to put the game out of reach. Bears RB Walter Payton rushed for 61 yards, while Richard Dent became just the fifth defender to be named Super Bowl MVP.

SUPERDOME
New Orleans, La.

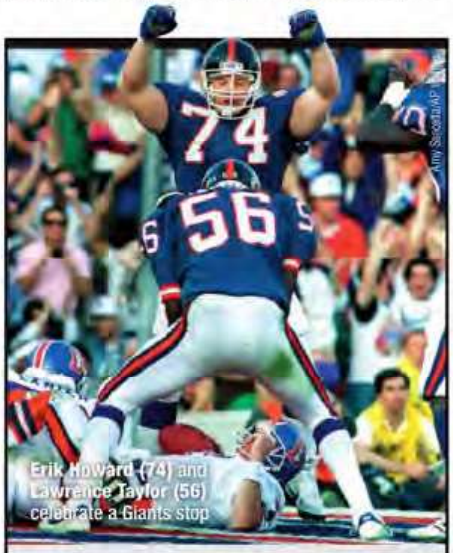
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Chicago	13	10	21	2	46
New England	3	0	0	7	10

1st Quarter
NE Franklin 36 FG, 1:19
CHI Butler 28 FG, 5:40
CHI Butler 24 FG, 13:34
CHI Suhey 11 run (Butler kick), 14:37

2nd Quarter
CHI McMahon 2 run (Butler kick), 7:36
CHI Butler 24 FG, 15:00

3rd Quarter
CHI McMahon 1 run (Butler kick), 7:38
CHI Phillips 28 interception return (Butler kick), 8:44
CHI Perry 1 run (Butler kick), 11:38

4th Quarter
NE Fryar 8 pass from Grogan (Franklin kick), 1:46
CHI Safety Waechter 0, 9:24


Erik Howard (74) and Lawrence Taylor (56) celebrate a Giants stop

SUPER BOWL XXI — JANUARY 25, 1987

New York Giants	39
Denver Broncos	20

Attendance: 101,063

MVP: Phil Simms (QB), Giants
22 of 25 passing, 268 yards, 3 TDs

How They Got There: New York – d. San Francisco, 49-3; d. Washington, 17-0 (NFC Championship). Denver – d. New England, 22-17; d. Cleveland, 23-20 in OT (AFC Championship).

Buoyed by a big defensive stand in the second quarter, the Giants captured their first NFL title since 1956. The Broncos had a first down at the New York 1-yard line, but were stymied on three running plays, which were followed by a missed field goal attempt. The Giants would take command in the third period en route to a 30-point second half, and moved in front for good on Mark Bavaro's 13-yard touchdown reception. Phil Simms deftly managed the game for the victors, setting a Super Bowl record by completing 88 precent of his passes.

ROSE BOWL
Pasadena, Calif.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Denver	10	0	0	10	20
New York Giants	7	2	17	13	39

1st Quarter
DEN Karlis 48 FG, 4:09
NYG Mowatt 6 pass from Simms (Allegre kick), 9:33
DEN Elway 4 run (Karlis kick), 12:54

2nd Quarter
NYG Safety Martin 0, 12:14

3rd Quarter
NYG Bavaro 13 pass from Simms (Allegre kick), 4:52
NYG Allegre 21 FG, 11:06
NYG Morris 1 run (Allegre kick), 14:36

4th Quarter
NYG McConkey 6 pass from Simms (Allegre kick), 4:04
DEN Karlis 28 FG, 8:59
NYG Anderson 2 run (kick failed), 11:42
DEN Johnson 47 pass from Elway (Karlis kick), 12:54

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Timmy Smith (36)

SUPER BOWL XXII — JANUARY 31, 1988

Washington Redskins 42
Denver Broncos 10

Attendance: 73,302

MVP: Doug Williams (QB), Redskins
18 of 29 passing, 340 yards, 4 TDs

How They Got There: Washington – d. Chicago, 21-17; d. Minnesota, 17-10 (NFC Championship). Denver – d. Houston Oilers, 34-10; d. Cleveland, 38-33 (AFC Championship).

The Redskins enjoyed a record-setting second quarter en route to victory. Trailing 10-0, Washington scored touchdowns on five straight possessions – establishing an NFL postseason mark for most points (35) in a period. QB Doug Williams led the way by passing for four TDs, including 80- and 50-yard bombs to Ricky Sanders, and the five TDs required only 18 total plays and 5:47 in possession. Timmy Smith amassed a Super Bowl-record 204 rushing yards (a mark that still stands), Barry Wilburn had two of the Redskins' three interceptions, and Alvin Walton recorded two of the team's five sacks.

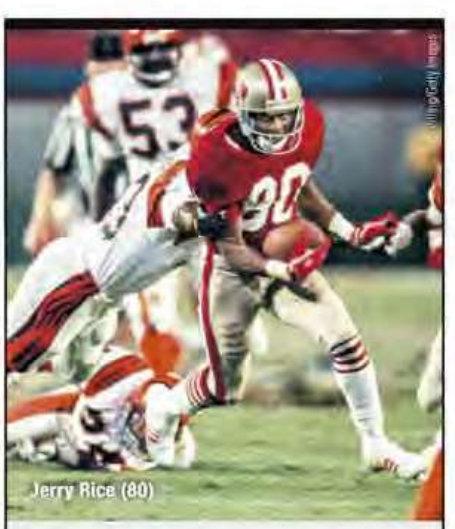
JACK MURPHY STADIUM
San Diego, Calif.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Washington	0	35	0	7	42
Denver	10	0	0	0	10

1st Quarter
DEN Nattiel 56 pass from Elway (Karlis kick), 1:57
DEN Karlis 24 FG, 5:51

2nd Quarter
WAS Sanders 80 pass from D. Williams (Haji-Sheikh kick), 0:53
WAS Clark 27 pass from D. Williams (Haji-Sheikh kick), 4:45
WAS Smith 58 run (Haji-Sheikh kick), 8:33
WAS Sanders 50 pass from D. Williams (Haji-Sheikh kick), 11:18
WAS Didier 8 pass from D. Williams (Haji-Sheikh kick), 13:56

4th Quarter
WAS Smith 4 run (Haji-Sheikh kick), 1:51


Jerry Rice (80)

SUPER BOWL XXIII — JANUARY 22, 1989

San Francisco 49ers 20
Cincinnati Bengals 16

Attendance: 75,129

MVP: Jerry Rice (WR), 49ers
11 receptions, 215 yards, 1 TD

How They Got There: San Francisco – d. Minnesota, 34-9; d. Chicago, 28-3 (NFC Championship). Cincinnati – d. Seattle, 21-13; d. Buffalo, 21-10 (AFC Championship).

By scoring on one of the most famous and clutch drives in league history, the 49ers became the first NFC team to win three Super Bowls. Cincinnati had taken a 16-13 lead on Jim Breech's 40-yard field goal with 3:20 remaining, but Joe Montana calmly drove San Francisco 92 yards over 11 plays, culminated with his 10-yard touchdown pass to John Taylor with just 34 seconds remaining. It was Taylor's lone catch of the game. Montana completed 23 of 36 passes for 357 yards, helping San Francisco post a 453 to 229 advantage in total yards.

JOE ROBBIE STADIUM
Miami, Fla.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Cincinnati	0	3	10	3	16
San Francisco	3	0	3	14	20

1st Quarter
SF Cofer 41 FG, 11:46

2nd Quarter
CIN Breech 34 FG, 13:41

3rd Quarter
CIN Breech 43 FG, 9:15
SF Cofer 32 FG, 14:10
CIN Jennings 93 kickoff return (Breech kick), 14:26

4th Quarter
SF Rice 14 pass from Montana (Cofer kick), 0:57
CIN Breech 40 FG, 11:40
SF Taylor 10 pass from Montana (Cofer kick), 14:26

Joe Montana

SUPER BOWL XXIV — JANUARY 28, 1990

San Francisco 49ers 55
Denver Broncos 10

Attendance: 72,919

MVP: Joe Montana (QB), 49ers
22 of 29 passing, 297 yards, 5 TDs

How They Got There: San Francisco – d. Minnesota, 41-13; d. L.A. Rams, 30-3 (NFC Championship). Denver – d. Pittsburgh, 24-23; d. Cleveland, 37-21 (AFC Championship).

The 49ers coasted to victory while setting a Super Bowl record for points that still stands. They scored touchdowns on four of their six first-half possessions to take a 27-3 lead at intermission, then kept the Broncos at bay with interceptions by Michael Walter and Chet Brooks to end Denver's first two drives of the second half. Joe Montana was named Super Bowl MVP for a record third time, with his favorite target being Jerry Rice, who caught seven passes for 148 yards and three touchdowns. The 49ers' dominance extended to first downs (28 to 12), net yards (461 to 167), and time of possession (39:31 to 20:29).

SUPERDOME
New Orleans, La.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
San Francisco	13	14	14	14	55
Denver	3	0	7	0	10

1st Quarter
SF Rice 20 pass from Montana (Cofer kick), 4:54
DEN Treadwell 42 FG, 8:13
SF Jones 7 pass from Montana (kick failed), 14:57

2nd Quarter
SF Rathman 1 run (Cofer kick), 7:45
SF Rice 38 pass from Montana (Cofer kick), 14:26

3rd Quarter
SF Rice 28 pass from Montana (Cofer kick), 2:12
SF Taylor 35 pass from Montana (Cofer kick), 5:16
DEN Elway 3 run (Treadwell kick), 8:07

4th Quarter
SF Rathman 3 run (Cofer kick), 0:03
SF Craig 1 run (Cofer kick), 1:13

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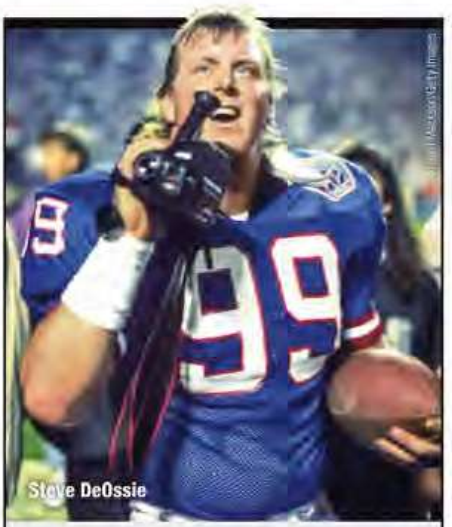

Steve DeOssie

SUPER BOWL XXV — JANUARY 27, 1991

New York Giants	20
Buffalo Bills	19

Attendance: 73,813

MVP: Ottis Anderson (RB), Giants
102 rushing yards, 1 TD; 5 receptions

How They Got There: New York – d. Chicago, 31-3; d. San Francisco, 15-13 (NFC Championship). Buffalo – d. Miami, 44-34; d. L.A. Raiders, 51-3 (AFC Championship).

Successfully employing a ball-control offense that saw them keep possession for more than 40 minutes, the Giants edged the high-powered Bills. Fourteen of New York's 73 plays came on its opening drive of the third quarter, which consumed a Super Bowl-record 9:29 and ended with Ottis Anderson's one-yard touchdown run. A Thurman Thomas TD jaunt put Buffalo back in front, but Matt Bahr gave New York the lead for good with his field goal midway through the fourth quarter. The Bills had a chance at victory in the final seconds, but Scott Norwood's 47-yard field goal attempt sailed wide right.

TAMPA STADIUM
Tampa, Fla.

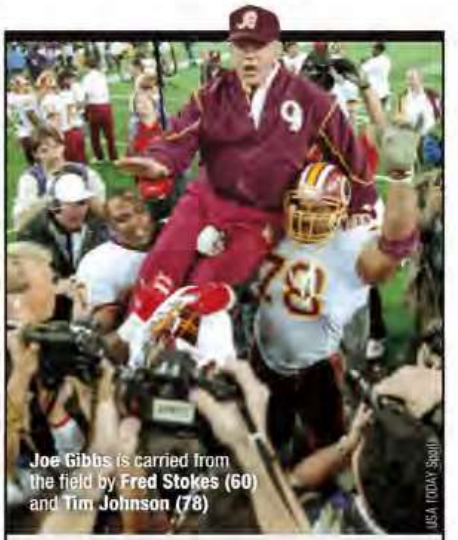
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Buffalo	3	9	0	7	19
New York Giants	3	7	7	3	20

1st Quarter
NYG Bahr 28 FG, 7:46
BUF Norwood 23 FG, 9:09

2nd Quarter
BUF D. Smith 1 run (Norwood kick), 2:30
BUF Safety B. Smith 0, 6:33
NYG Baker 14 pass from Hostetler (Bahr kick), 14:35

3rd Quarter
NYG Anderson 1 run (Bahr kick), 9:29

4th Quarter
BUF Thomas 31 run (Norwood kick), 0:08
NYG Bahr 21 FG, 7:40


Joe Gibbs is carried from the field by **Fred Stokes (60)** and **Tim Johnson (78)**

SUPER BOWL XXVI — JANUARY 26, 1992

Washington Redskins	37
Buffalo Bills	24

Attendance: 63,130

MVP: Mark Rypien (QB), Redskins
18 of 33 passing, 292 yards, 2 TDs

How They Got There: Washington – d. Atlanta, 24-7; d. Detroit, 41-10 (NFC Championship). Buffalo – d. Kansas City, 37-14; d. Denver, 10-7 (AFC Championship).

After Buffalo had erased 10 points off a 24-0 deficit, Mark Rypien restored order with his 30-yard TD pass to Gary Clark that propelled Washington to its third Super Bowl win in 10 years – each one under coach Joe Gibbs but each with a different quarterback. The Redskins held a 17-0 halftime lead and quickly extended it on Gerald Riggs' short scoring run that was set up by a Kurt Gouveia interception. It was one of four pickoffs by the Redskins' defense. Clark finished with seven catches for 114 yards and Art Monk added seven for 113 for the Redskins, who amassed 417 yards of total offense.

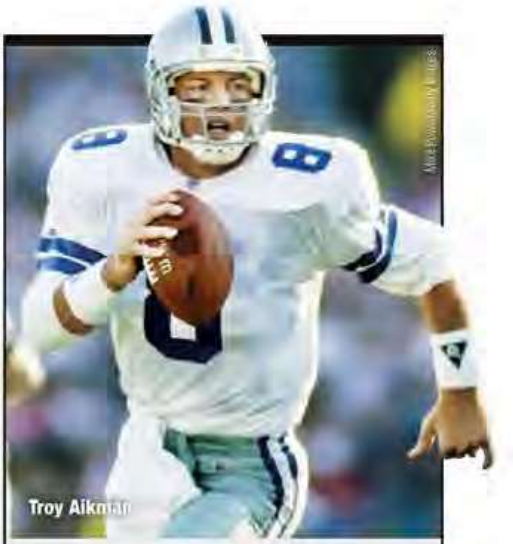
METRODOME
Minneapolis, Minn.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Washington	0	17	14	6	37
Buffalo	0	0	10	14	24

2nd Quarter
WAS Lohmiller 34 FG, 1:58
WAS Byner 10 pass from Rypien (Lohmiller kick), 5:06
WAS Riggs 1 run (Lohmiller kick), 7:43

3rd Quarter
WAS Riggs 2 run (Lohmiller kick), 0:16
BUF Norwood 21 FG, 3:01
BUF Thomas 1 run (Norwood kick), 9:02
WAS Clark 30 pass from Rypien (Lohmiller kick), 13:36

4th Quarter
WAS Lohmiller 25 FG, 0:06
WAS Lohmiller 39 FG, 3:24
BUF Metzelaars 2 pass from Kelly (Norwood kick), 9:01
BUF Beebe 4 pass from Kelly (Norwood kick), 11:05


Troy Aikman

SUPER BOWL XXVII — JANUARY 31, 1993

Dallas Cowboys	52
Buffalo Bills	17

Attendance: 98,374

MVP: Troy Aikman (QB), Cowboys
22 of 30 passing, 273 yards, 4 TDs

How They Got There: Dallas – d. Philadelphia, 34-10; d. San Francisco, 30-20 (NFC Championship). Buffalo – d. Houston Oilers, 41-38 in OT; d. Pittsburgh, 24-3; d. Miami, 29-10 (AFC Championship).

Troy Aikman threw for four touchdowns, Emmitt Smith rushed for 108 yards, and the Cowboys converted nine turnovers into 35 points while coasting to victory. Two of those turnovers helped the Cowboys take the lead for good late in the opening quarter. First, Dallas safety James Washington intercepted a pass that he returned to the Bills 47, setting up Aikman's 23-yard TD throw to Jay Novacek. On the next play from scrimmage, a sack by Charles Haley forced a Bills fumble that Jimmie Jones picked up and ran two yards for another score.

ROSE BOWL
Pasadena, Calif.

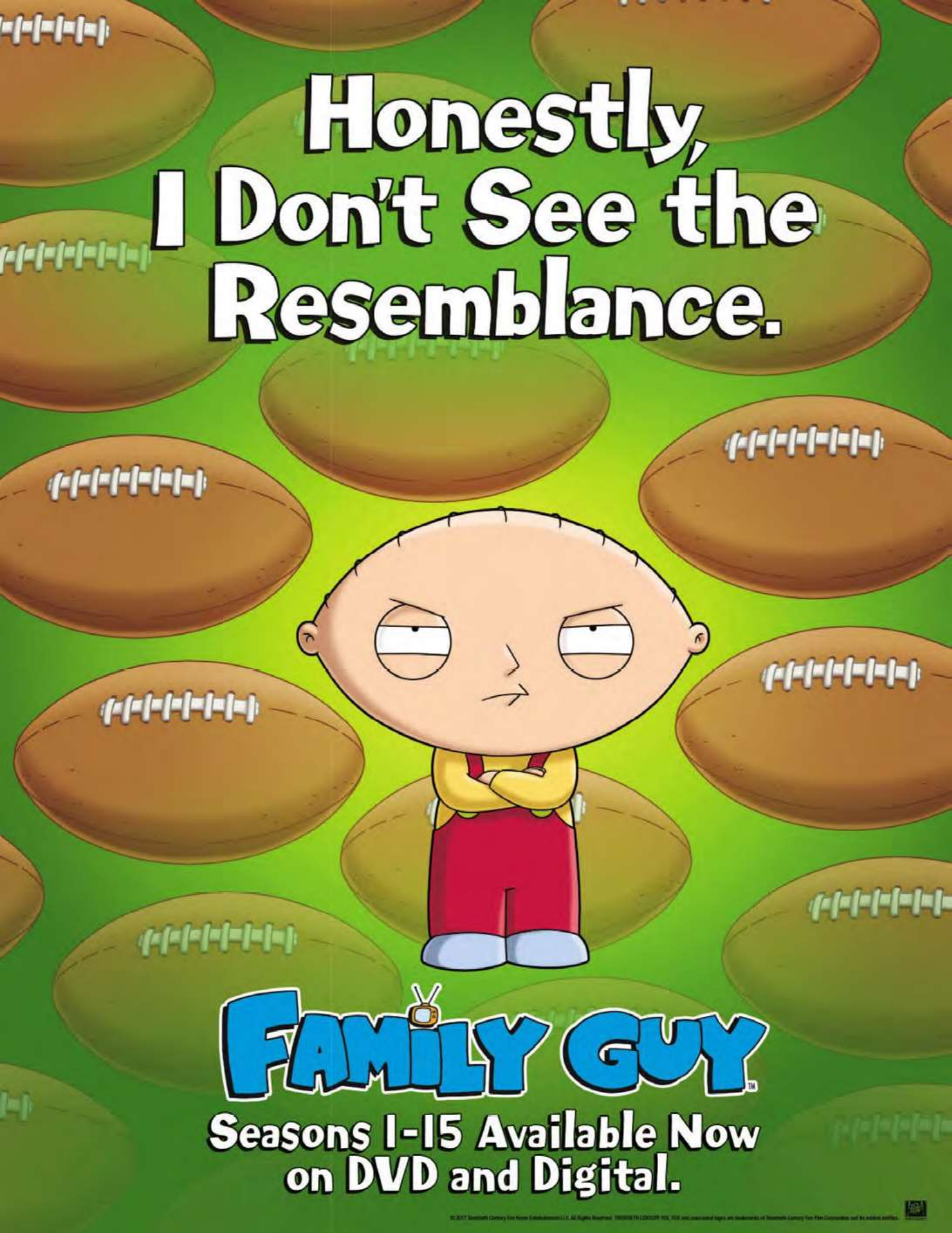
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Buffalo	7	3	7	0	17
Dallas	14	14	3	21	52

1st Quarter
BUF T. Thomas 2 run (Christie kick), 5:00
DAL Novacek 23 pass from Aikman (Elliott kick), 13:24
DAL J. Jones 2 fumble return (Elliott kick), 13:39

2nd Quarter
BUF Christie 21 FG, 11:36
DAL Irvin 19 pass from Aikman (Elliott kick), 13:06
DAL Irvin 18 pass from Aikman (Elliott kick), 13:24

3rd Quarter
DAL FG Elliott 20, 6:39
BUF Beebe 40 pass from Reich (Christie kick), 15:00

4th Quarter
DAL Harper 45 pass from Aikman (Elliott kick), 4:56
DAL E. Smith 10 run (Elliott kick), 6:48
DAL Norton 9 fumble return (Elliott kick), 7:29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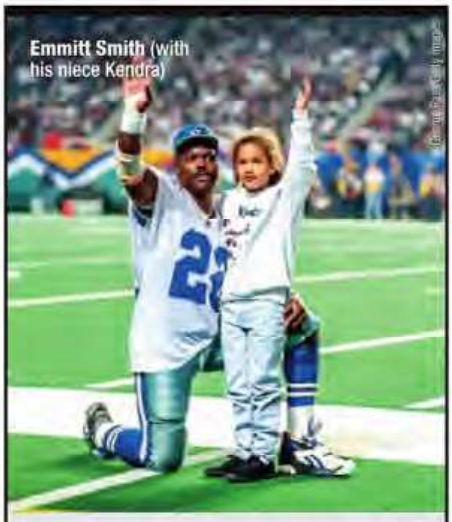

Emmitt Smith (with his niece Kendra)

SUPER BOWL XXVIII JANUARY 30, 1994

Dallas Cowboys 30
Buffalo Bills 13

Attendance: 72,817

MVP: Emmitt Smith (RB), Cowboys
30 carries, 132 yards, 2 TDs

How They Got There: Dallas – d. Green Bay, 27-17; d. San Francisco, 38-21 (NFC Championship). Buffalo – d. L.A. Raiders, 29-23; d. Kansas City, 30-13 (AFC Championship).

Dallas became the first team to begin the season 0-2 and go on to win the Super Bowl, and the fifth team to capture back-to-back Super Bowl titles. A big defensive play and Emmitt Smith's two TD runs helped the Cowboys erase a 13-6 halftime deficit. Just 55 seconds after intermission, safety James Washington recovered a fumble and weaved his way 46 yards for a touchdown to tie the game. After the Bills punted on their next possession, Smith took over, carrying seven times for 61 yards on a march that ended with his 15-yard scoring jaunt to put Dallas ahead for good. Washington added a fourth-quarter interception that led to another Smith touchdown run.

GEORGIA DOME
Atlanta, Ga.

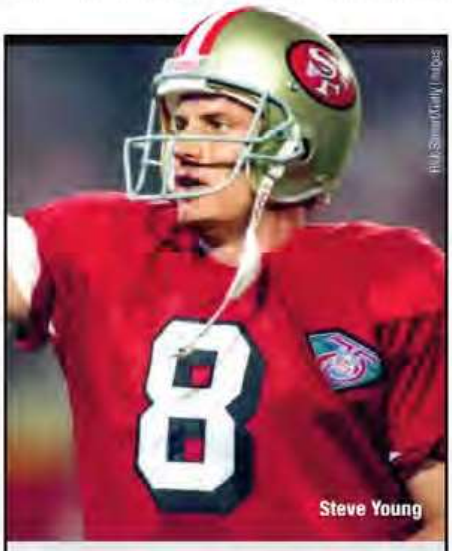
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Dallas	6	0	14	10	30
Buffalo	3	10	0	0	13

1st Quarter
DAL Murray 41 FG, 2:19
BUF Christie 54 FG, 4:41
DAL Murray 24 FG, 11:05

2nd Quarter
BUF Thomas 4 run (Christie kick), 2:34
BUF Christie 28 FG, 15:00

3rd Quarter
DAL Washington 46 fumble return (Murray kick), 0:55
DAL E. Smith 15 run (Murray kick), 6:18

4th Quarter
DAL E. Smith 1 run (Murray kick), 5:10
DAL Murray 20 FG, 12:10


Steve Young

SUPER BOWL XXIX JANUARY 29, 1995

San Francisco 49ers 49
San Diego Chargers 26

Attendance: 74,107

MVP: Steve Young (QB), 49ers
24 of 36 passing, 325 yards, 6 TDs

How They Got There: San Francisco – d. Chicago, 44-15; d. Dallas, 38-28 (NFC Championship). San Diego – d. Miami, 22-21; d. Pittsburgh, 17-13 (AFC Championship).

Steve Young passed for a Super Bowl-record six TDs as the 49ers became the first team to win five Super Bowls. The QB, who directed an explosive offense that generated seven touchdowns, 28 first downs, and 455 total yards, wasted little time getting his team on the scoreboard. He fired a 44-yard touchdown throw to Jerry Rice only three plays and 1:24 into the game, and made it 14-0 with a 51-yard pass to Rickey Watters on the 49ers' next possession. Both Rice and Watters scored three times in the win, and the 75 combined points established another Super Bowl record that still stands.

JOE ROBBIE STADIUM
Miami, Fla.

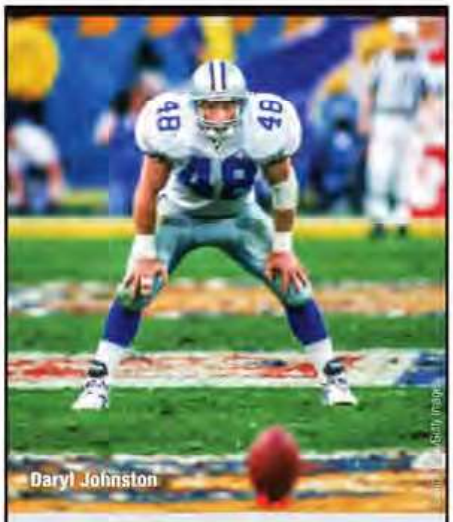
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
San Diego	7	3	8	8	26
San Francisco	14	14	14	7	49

1st Quarter
SF Rice 44 pass from S. Young (Brien kick), 1:24
SF Watters 51 pass from S. Young (Brien kick), 4:55
SD Means 1 run (Carney kick), 12:16

2nd Quarter
SF Floyd 5 pass from S. Young (Brien kick), 1:58
SF Watters 8 pass from S. Young (Brien kick), 10:16
SD Carney 31 FG, 13:16

3rd Quarter
SF Watters 9 run (Brien kick), 5:25
SF Rice 15 pass from S. Young (Brien kick), 11:42
SD Coleman 98 kickoff return (Seay pass from Humphries), 11:59

4th Quarter
SF Rice 7 pass from S. Young (Brien kick), 1:11
SD Martin 30 pass from Humphries (Pupunu pass from Humphries), 12:35


Daryl Johnston

SUPER BOWL XXX JANUARY 28, 1996

Dallas Cowboys 27
Pittsburgh Steelers 17

Attendance: 76,347

MVP: Larry Brown (CB), Cowboys
2 interceptions, both leading to Dallas TDs

How They Got There: Dallas – d. Philadelphia, 30-11; d. Green Bay, 38-27 (NFC Championship). Pittsburgh – d. Buffalo, 40-21; d. Indianapolis, 20-16 (AFC Championship).

Cornerback Larry Brown's two interceptions led to 14 second-half points, lifting the Cowboys to their third Super Bowl victory in four seasons and fifth title overall. Dallas scored on each of its first three possessions, taking a 13-0 lead behind Troy Aikman's three-yard TD pass to Jay Novacek and two Chris Boniol field goals. The Steelers managed to stay close, pulling within 13-7 and then 20-17, but Brown's heroics kept Dallas ahead. Both of his pickoffs set up short scoring runs by Emmitt Smith, the second with just 3:43 remaining in the game.

SUN DEVIL STADIUM
Tempe, Ariz.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Dallas	10	3	7	7	27
Pittsburgh	0	7	0	10	17

1st Quarter
DAL Boniol 42 FG, 2:55
DAL Novacek 3 pass from Aikman (Boniol kick), 9:37

2nd Quarter
DAL Boniol 35 FG, 8:57
PIT Thigpen 6 pass from O'Donnell (N. Johnson kick), 14:47

3rd Quarter
DAL E. Smith 1 run (Boniol kick), 8:18

4th Quarter
PIT N. Johnson 46 FG, 3:40
PIT Morris 1 run (N. Johnson kick), 8:24
DAL E. Smith 4 run (Boniol kick), 11:17

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Brett Favre

SUPER BOWL XXXI JANUARY 26, 1997

Green Bay Packers 35
New England Patriots 21

Attendance: 72,301

MVP: Desmond Howard (KR-PR), Packers
244 return yards, 99-yard kickoff return for TD

How They Got There: Green Bay – d. San Francisco, 35-14; d. Carolina, 30-13 (NFC Championship). New England – d. Pittsburgh, 28-3; d. Jacksonville, 20-6 (AFC Championship).

The NFC's Super Bowl win streak reached 13 games, thanks to big plays from Brett Favre and Desmond Howard that fueled the Packers. Favre threw for two touchdowns and ran for a third, while Howard's 99-yard kickoff-return TD in the third quarter stemmed New England's momentum. On Green Bay's second play from scrimmage, Favre hit Andre Rison for a 54-yard touchdown and he later connected with Antonio Freeman on an 81-yarder. But it wasn't until Howard's return late in the third quarter that the Packers' lead was safe.

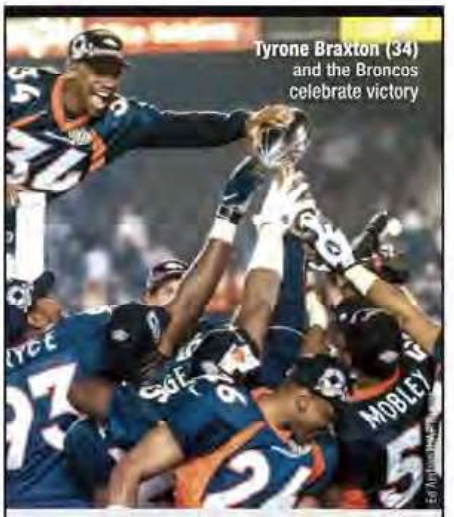
SUPERDOME
New Orleans, La.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
New England	14	0	7	0	21
Green Bay	10	17	8	0	35

1st Quarter
GB Rison 54 pass from Favre (Jacke kick), 3:32
GB Jacke 37 FG, 6:18
NE Byars 1 pass from Bledsoe (Vinatieri kick), 8:25
NE Coates 4 pass from Bledsoe (Vinatieri kick), 12:27

2nd Quarter
GB Freeman 81 pass from Favre (Jacke kick), 0:56
GB Jacke 31 FG, 6:45
GB Favre 2 run (Jacke kick), 13:49

3rd Quarter
NE Martin 18 run (Vinatieri kick), 11:33
GB Howard 99 kickoff return (Chmura pass from Favre), 11:50


Tyrone Braxton (34) and the Broncos celebrate victory

SUPER BOWL XXXII JANUARY 25, 1998

Denver Broncos 31
Green Bay Packers 24

Attendance: 68,912

MVP: Terrell Davis (RB), Broncos
30 carries, 157 yards, 3 TDs

How They Got There: Denver – d. Jacksonville, 42-17; d. Kansas City, 14-10; d. Pittsburgh, 24-21 (AFC Championship). Green Bay – d. Tampa Bay, 21-7; d. San Francisco, 23-10 (NFC Championship).

Terrell Davis rushed for 157 yards and a Super Bowl-record three touchdowns to lead the Broncos to their first NFL title and snap the NFC's streak of Super Bowl victories at 13. With the game knotted, 24-24, and just 3:27 left in regulation, the Broncos took over at the Packers 49. Davis rushed for two yards, and a 15-yard facemask penalty moved the ball to the Packers 32. Three plays later, Davis' 17-yard run brought the ball to the 1, and after a timeout, he waltzed into the end zone for the go-ahead score. Green Bay drove to the Broncos 31 in the waning seconds, but John Mobley knocked away a fourth-down pass to preserve the victory.

QUALCOMM STADIUM
San Diego, Calif.

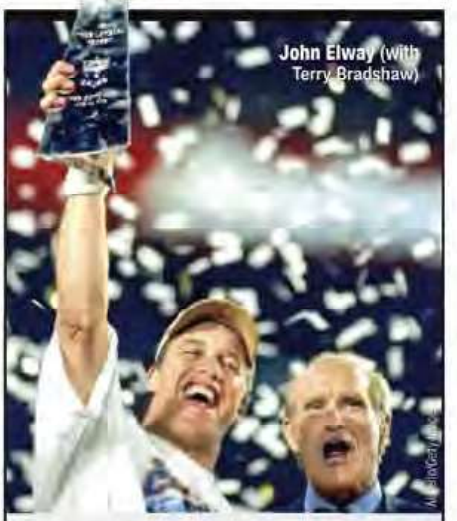
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Green Bay	7	7	3	7	24
Denver	7	10	7	7	31

1st Quarter
GB Freeman 22 pass from Favre (Longwell kick), 4:02
DEN Davis 1 run (Elam kick), 9:21

2nd Quarter
DEN Elway 1 run (Elam kick), 0:05
DEN Elam 51 FG, 2:39
GB Chmura 6 pass from Favre (Longwell kick), 14:48

3rd Quarter
GB Longwell 27 FG, 3:01
DEN Davis 1 run (Elam kick), 14:26

4th Quarter
GB Freeman 13 pass from Favre (Longwell kick), 1:28
DEN Davis 1 run (Elam kick), 13:15


John Elway (with Terry Bradshaw)

SUPER BOWL XXXIII JANUARY 31, 1999

Denver Broncos 34
Atlanta Falcons 19

Attendance: 74,803

MVP: John Elway (QB), Broncos
18 of 29 passing, 336 yards, 1 TD

How They Got There: Denver – d. Miami, 38-3; d. N.Y. Jets, 23-10 (AFC Championship). Atlanta – d. San Francisco, 20-18; d. Minnesota, 30-27 in OT (NFC Championship).

Playing in his final game, John Elway shined while leading the Broncos to their second straight Super Bowl victory, the first AFC team to achieve that feat since the Steelers 19 years earlier. Denver took the lead early, with Elway's 41-yard pass to Rod Smith setting up Howard Griffith's short TD run. Elway then fired an 80-yard scoring strike to Smith to put the Broncos ahead, 17-3. In the second half, Darrien Gordon dashed Atlanta's comeback hopes with interceptions on consecutive possessions that led to Denver touchdowns, the second of those a three-yard Elway run making it 31-6.

PRO PLAYER STADIUM
Miami, Fla.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Denver	7	10	0	17	34
Atlanta	3	3	0	13	19

1st Quarter
ATL Andersen 32 FG, 5:25
DEN Griffith 1 run (Elam kick), 11:05

2nd Quarter
DEN Elam 26 FG, 5:43
DEN R. Smith 80 pass from Elway (Elam kick), 10:06
ATL Andersen 28 FG, 12:35

4th Quarter
DEN Griffith 1 run (Elam kick), 0:04
DEN Elway 3 run (Elam kick), 3:40
ATL Dwight 94 kickoff return (Andersen kick), 3:59
DEN Elam 37 FG, 7:52
ATL Mathis 3 pass from Chandler (pass failed), 12:56

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SUPER BOWL XXXIV JANUARY 30, 2000

St. Louis Rams 23
Tennessee Titans 16

Attendance: 72,625

MVP: Kurt Warner (QB), Rams
24 of 45 passing, 414 yards, 2 TDs

How They Got There: St. Louis – d. Minnesota, 49-37; d. Tampa Bay, 11-6 (NFC Championship). Tennessee – d. Buffalo, 22-16; d. Indianapolis, 19-16; d. Jacksonville, 33-14 (AFC Championship).

Mike Jones tackled Tennessee's Kevin Dyson at the 1-yard line as time expired, preserving the Rams' first Super Bowl title. For coach Dick Vermeil, the win came 19 years after he brought the Eagles to the Super Bowl, marking the longest stretch between Super Bowl appearances by a coach. St. Louis reached the red zone on each of its first six possessions, but managed just three field goals and one touchdown. The Titans then rallied with two long TD drives and an Al Del Greco field goal to tie the game late in the fourth quarter. It was quickly untied as on the next play from scrimmage, Kurt Warner fired a 73-yard touchdown pass to Isaac Bruce. Tennessee then drove deep into Rams territory, only to come up empty when Jones wrapped up Dyson shy of the goal line.

GEORGIA DOME
Atlanta, Ga.

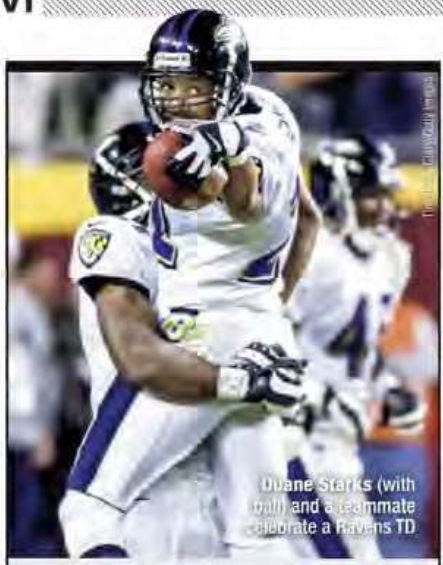
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
St. Louis	3	6	7	7	23
Tennessee	0	0	6	10	16

1st Quarter
STL Wilkins 27 FG, 12:00

2nd Quarter
STL Wilkins 29 FG, 10:44
STL Wilkins 28 FG, 14:45

3rd Quarter
STL Holt 9 pass from Warner (Wilkins kick), 7:40
TEN George 1 run (pass failed), 14:46

4th Quarter
TEN George 2 run (Del Greco kick), 7:39
TEN Del Greco 43 FG, 12:45
STL Bruce 73 pass from Warner (Wilkins kick), 13:06


Duane Starks (with ball) and a teammate celebrate a Ravens TD

SUPER BOWL XXXV JANUARY 28, 2001

Baltimore Ravens 34
New York Giants 7

Attendance: 71,921

MVP: Ray Lewis (LB), Ravens
Star of a defense that allowed just 152 total yards

How They Got There: Baltimore – d. Denver, 21-3; d. Tennessee, 24-10; d. Oakland, 16-3 (AFC Championship). New York – d. Philadelphia, 20-10; d. Minnesota, 41-0 (NFC Championship).

The Ravens' defense led the way by permitting just 152 yards, forcing five turnovers, recording four sacks, and not allowing an offensive touchdown as the franchise posted its first Super Bowl victory. In a dizzying 36-second span of the third quarter, Baltimore's Duane Starks returned an interception 49 yards for a TD and a 17-0 Ravens lead. The Giants' Ron Dixon brought back the ensuing kickoff 97 yards for a score, but Jermaine Lewis matched it with a kickoff-return TD of his own. The Giants managed just one first down on their final four possessions.

RAYMOND JAMES STADIUM
Tampa, Fla.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Baltimore	7	3	14	10	34
New York Giants	0	0	7	0	7

1st Quarter
BAL Stokley 38 pass from Dilfer (Stover kick), 8:10

2nd Quarter
BAL Stover 47 FG, 13:19

3rd Quarter
BAL Starks 49 interception return (Stover kick), 11:11
NYG Dixon 97 kickoff return (Daluiso kick), 11:29
BAL Je. Lewis 84 kickoff return (Stover kick), 11:47

4th Quarter
BAL Ja. Lewis 3 run (Stover kick), 6:15
BAL Stover 34 FG, 9:33

Troy Brown (80)

SUPER BOWL XXXVI FEBRUARY 3, 2002

New England Patriots 20
St. Louis Rams 17

Attendance: 72,922

MVP: Tom Brady (QB), Patriots
16 of 27 passing, 145 yards, 1 TD

How They Got There: New England – d. Oakland, 16-13 in OT; d. Pittsburgh, 24-17 (AFC Championship). St. Louis – d. Green Bay, 45-17; d. Philadelphia, 29-24 (NFC Championship).

Adam Vinatieri's 48-yard field goal proved the difference as the Patriots prevailed in the first Super Bowl where the winning points were scored on the final play. Underdog New England had built a 17-3 lead, but the Rams tied things up with two fourth-quarter touchdowns – the second with just 1:30 to go – before Patriots QB Tom Brady positioned his team for the game-winning kick. He completed five passes on the drive, three of those to J.R. Redmond and another a 23-yarder to Troy Brown that brought the ball into St. Louis territory.

SUPERDOME
New Orleans, La.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
St. Louis	3	0	0	14	17
New England	0	14	3	3	20

1st Quarter
STL FG Wilkins 50, 11:50

2nd Quarter
NE Law 47 interception return (Vinatieri kick), 6:11
NE Patten 8 pass from Brady (Vinatieri kick), 14:29

3rd Quarter
NE Vinatieri 37 FG, 13:42

4th Quarter
STL Warner 2 run (Wilkins kick), 5:29
STL Proehl 26 pass from Warner (Wilkins kick), 13:30
NE Vinatieri 48 FG, 15:00

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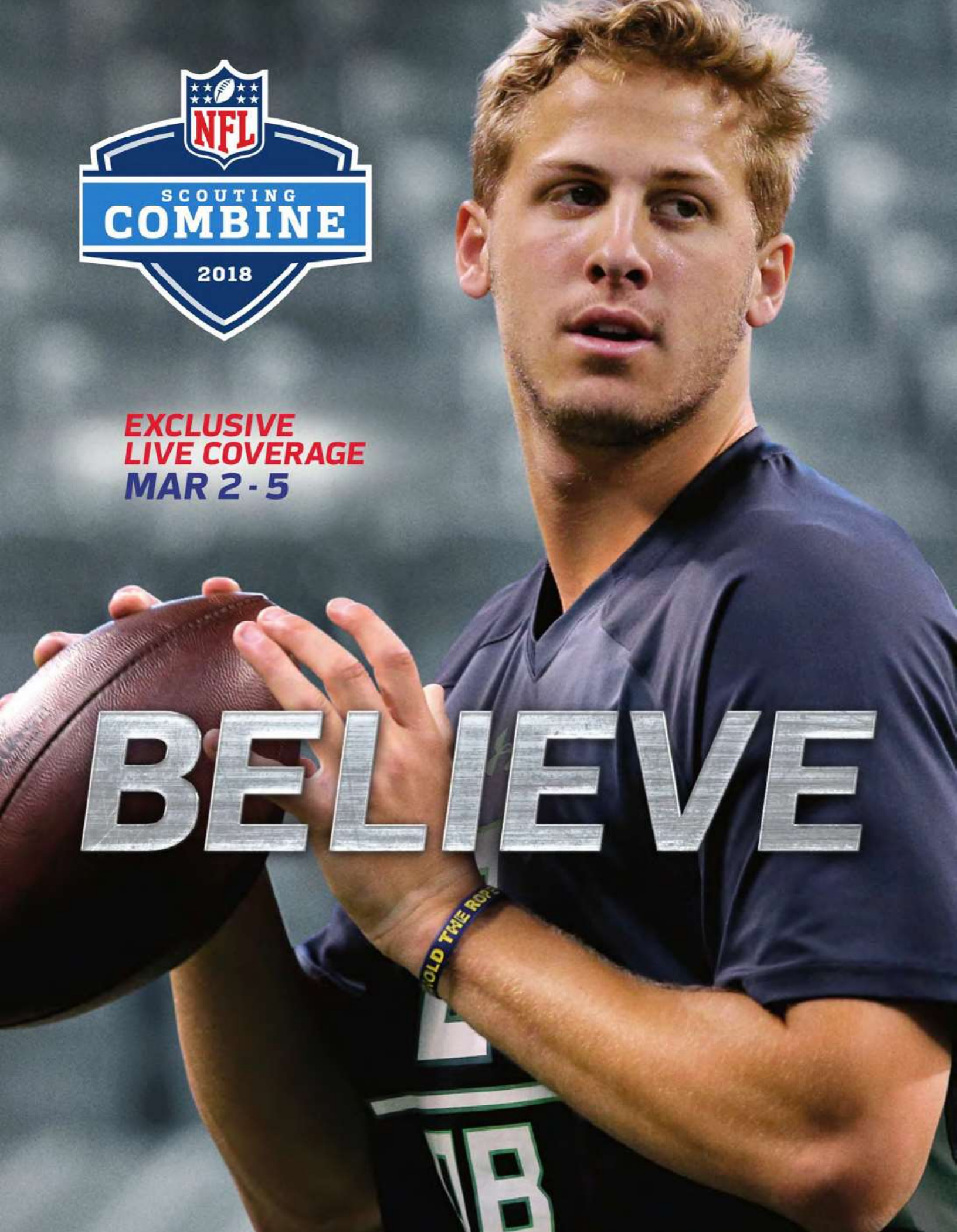
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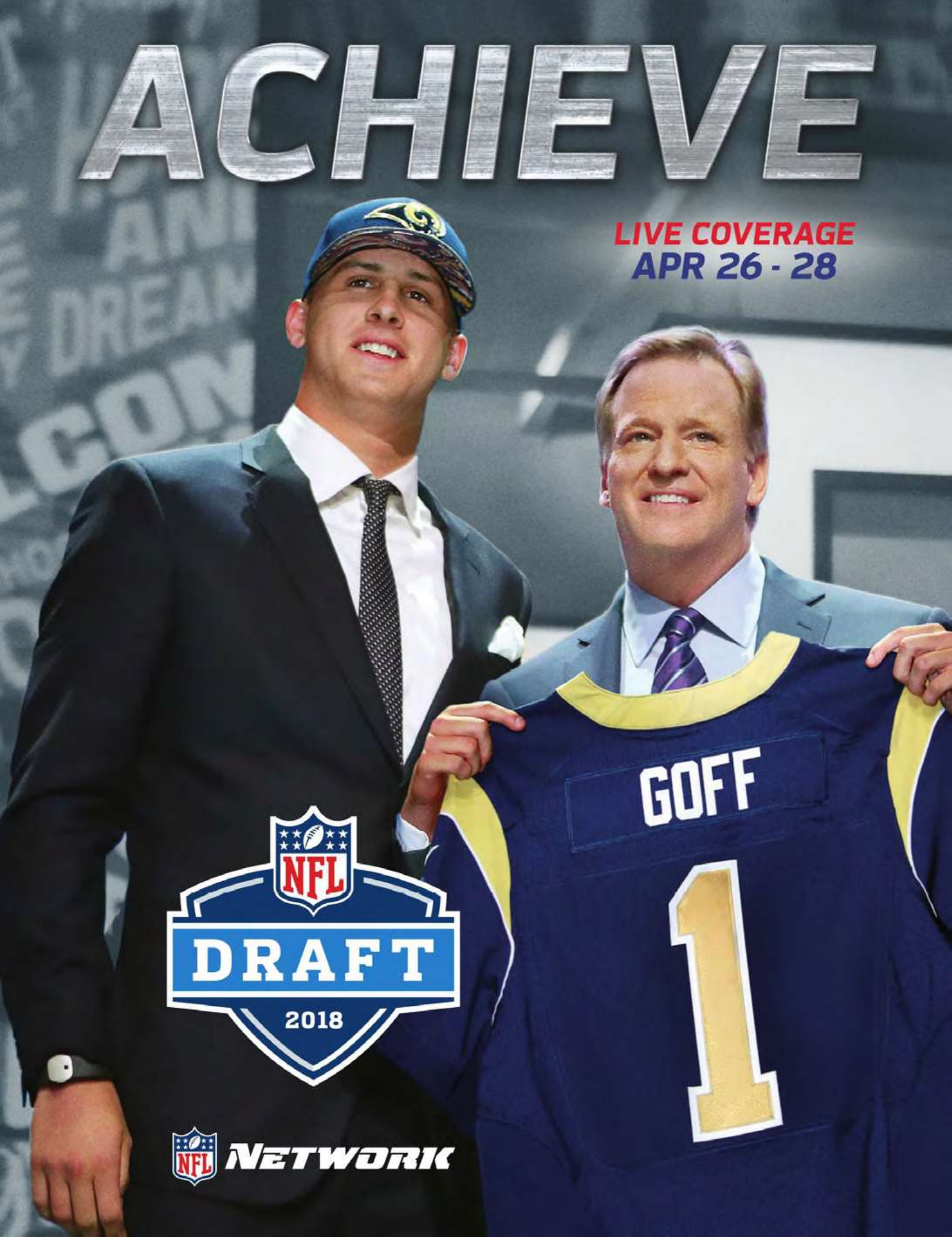
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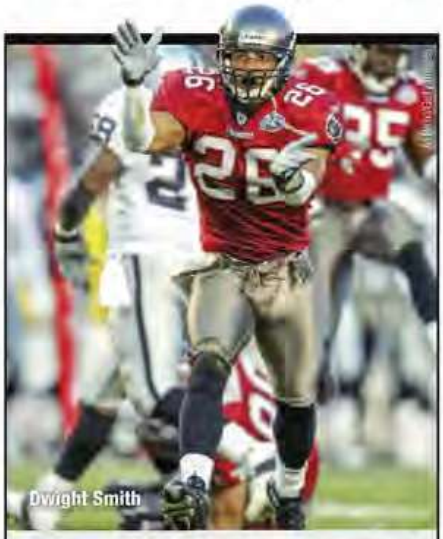

Dwight Smith

SUPER BOWL XXXVII JANUARY 26, 2003

Tampa Bay Buccaneers 48
Oakland Raiders 21

Attendance: 67,603

MVP: Dexter Jackson (S), Buccaneers
2 interceptions

How They Got There: Tampa Bay – d. San Francisco, 31-6; d. Philadelphia, 27-10 (NFC Championship). Oakland – d. N.Y. Jets, 30-10; d. Tennessee, 41-24 (AFC Championship).

Tampa Bay intercepted five passes, three that it returned for TDs, on its way to the win. After an early field goal, Oakland managed just two first downs on its next nine possessions while the Buccaneers rolled to 34 straight points. Keenan McCardell ignited a decisive sequence, catching touchdown passes on back-to-back drives that put his team ahead, 27-3.

QUALCOMM STADIUM
San Diego, Calif.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Oakland	3	0	6	12	21
Tampa Bay	3	17	14	14	48

1st Quarter
OAK Janikowski 40 FG, 4:20
TB Gramatica 31 FG, 7:09

2nd Quarter
TB Gramatica 43 FG, 3:44
TB Alstott 2 run (Gramatica kick), 8:36
TB McCardell 5 pass from B. Johnson (Gramatica kick), 14:30

3rd Quarter
TB McCardell 8 pass from B. Johnson (Gramatica kick), 9:30
TB D. Smith 44 interception return (Gramatica kick), 10:13
OAK Porter 39 pass from Gannon (pass failed), 12:46

4th Quarter
OAK E. Johnson 13 return of blocked punt (pass failed), 0:46
OAK J. Rice 48 pass from Gannon (pass failed), 8:54
TB Brooks 44 interception return (Gramatica kick), 13:42
TB D. Smith 50 interception return (Gramatica kick), 14:58

Kevin Faulk

SUPER BOWL XXXVIII FEBRUARY 1, 2004

New England Patriots 32
Carolina Panthers 29

Attendance: 71,525

MVP: Tom Brady (QB), Patriots
32 of 48 passing, 354 yards, 3 TDs

How They Got There: New England – d. Tennessee, 17-14; d. Indianapolis, 24-14 (AFC Championship). Carolina – d. Dallas, 29-10; d. St. Louis, 29-23 in 2 OTs; d. Philadelphia, 14-3 (NFC Championship).

Adam Vinatieri's 41-yard field goal with four seconds to play lifted New England to its second championship in three years. While it took a Super Bowl-record 26 minutes, 55 seconds for the first points to be scored, the teams eventually combined for 868 total yards (481 by the Patriots). Carolina briefly moved in front on an 85-yard Muhsin Muhammad TD reception and later tied the game on Ricky Proehl's 12-yard scoring catch with 1:08 to play. But Tom Brady calmly drove the Patriots into field goal range, aided by Deion Branch's clutch 17-yard grab.

RELIANT STADIUM
Houston, Texas

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Carolina	0	10	0	19	29
New England	0	14	0	18	32

2nd Quarter
NE Branch 5 pass from Brady (Vinatieri kick), 11:55
CAR S. Smith 39 pass from Delhomme (Kasay kick), 13:53
NE Givens 5 pass from Brady (Vinatieri kick), 14:42
CAR Kasay 50 FG, 15:00

4th Quarter
NE A. Smith 2 run (Vinatieri kick), 0:11
CAR Foster 33 run (pass failed), 2:21
CAR Muhammad 85 pass from Delhomme (pass failed), 8:07
NE Vrabel 1 pass from Brady (Faulk run), 12:09
CAR Proehl 12 pass from Delhomme (Kasay kick), 13:52
NE Vinatieri 41 FG, 14:56

Asante Samuel (22) and Rodney Harrison (37)

SUPER BOWL XXXIX FEBRUARY 6, 2005

New England Patriots 24
Philadelphia Eagles 21

Attendance: 78,125

MVP: Deion Branch (WR), Patriots
11 receptions, 133 yards

How They Got There: New England – d. Indianapolis, 20-3; d. Pittsburgh, 41-27 (AFC Championship). Philadelphia – d. Minnesota, 27-14; d. Atlanta, 27-10 (NFC Championship).

Behind a defense that forced four turnovers – including two clutch fourth-quarter interceptions – the Patriots joined the Cowboys as the only teams to win three Super Bowls in a span of four seasons. New England took the lead for good early in the fourth quarter on a drive sparked by Kevin Faulk, who caught screen passes of 13 and 14 yards and added a 12-yard run. Corey Dillon capped the possession with his two-yard TD run, and after Adam Vinatieri's 22-yard field goal made it 24-14, Tedy Bruschi and Rodney Harrison stepped up with interceptions that preserved the outcome.

ALLTEL STADIUM
Jacksonville, Fla.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
New England	0	7	7	10	24
Philadelphia	0	7	7	7	21

2nd Quarter
PHI Smith 6 pass from McNabb (Akers kick) 5:05
NE Givens 4 pass from Brady (Vinatieri kick), 13:50

3rd Quarter
NE Vrabel 2 pass from Brady (Vinatieri kick), 3:56
PHI Westbrook 10 pass from McNabb (Akers kick), 11:25

4th Quarter
NE Dillon 2 run (Vinatieri kick), 1:16
NE Vinatieri 22 FG, 6:20
PHI G. Lewis 30 pass from McNabb (Akers kick), 13:12

Hines Ward (86) (with son Jaden) and Jerome Bettis

SUPER BOWL XL — FEBRUARY 5, 2006

Pittsburgh Steelers 21
Seattle Seahawks 10

Attendance: 68,206

MVP: Hines Ward (WR), Steelers
5 receptions, 123 yards, 1 TD

How They Got There: Pittsburgh – d. Cincinnati, 31-17; d. Indianapolis, 21-18; d. Denver, 34-17 (AFC Championship). Seattle – d. Washington, 20-10; d. Carolina, 34-14 (NFC Championship).

The Steelers finally earned their "one for the thumb," becoming the first AFC team to win five Super Bowls. Holding a tenuous 14-10 fourth-quarter lead, the game's key sequence came when cornerback Ike Taylor picked off a pass to stop a Seahawks threat. Pittsburgh quickly cashed in when Antwaan Randle El, a quarterback in college, took a handoff, sprinted right, then stopped and fired a 43-yard strike to Hines Ward for the first Super Bowl TD pass thrown by a wide receiver. In the third quarter, the Steelers' Willie Parker burst free for a Super Bowl-record 75-yard touchdown run.

FORD FIELD
Detroit, Mich.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Seattle	3	0	7	0	10
Pittsburgh	0	7	7	7	21

1st Quarter
SEA Brown 47 FG, 14:38

2nd Quarter
PIT Roethlisberger 1 run (Reed kick), 13:05

3rd Quarter
PIT Parker 75 run (Reed kick), 0:22
SEA Stevens 16 pass from Hasselbeck (Brown kick), 8:15

4th Quarter
PIT Ward 43 pass from Randle El (Reed kick), 6:04

Peyton Manning

SUPER BOWL XLI — FEBRUARY 4, 2007

Indianapolis Colts 29
Chicago Bears 17

Attendance: 74,512

MVP: Peyton Manning (QB), Colts
25 of 38 passing, 247 yards, 1 TD

How They Got There: Indianapolis – d. Kansas City, 23-8; d. Baltimore, 15-6; d. New England, 38-34 (AFC Championship). Chicago – d. Seattle, 27-24 in OT; d. New Orleans, 39-14 (NFC Championship).

A wet and wild night of Super Bowl firsts brought Tony Dungy, Peyton Manning, and the Colts to the top of the NFL. Dungy became the first African-American head coach to win the Super Bowl while directing the franchise to its first crown since relocating to Indianapolis in 1984. It was also the first Super Bowl title for Manning, whose career saw him set league marks for completions, passing yards, and passing TDs. The game also marked the first time the opening kickoff was run back for a touchdown, accomplished when the Bears' Devin Hester sped downfield 92 yards to give his team the early lead.

DOLPHIN STADIUM
Miami, Fla.

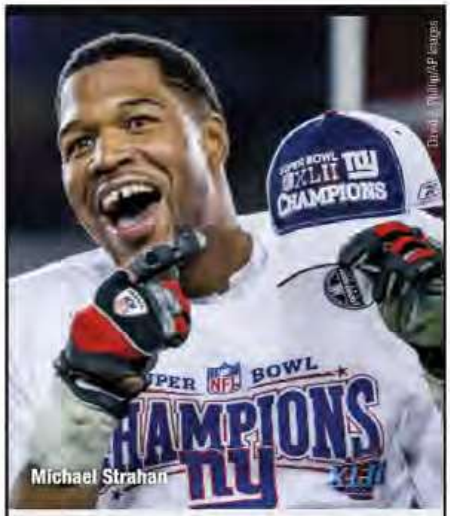
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Indianapolis	6	10	6	7	29
Chicago	14	0	3	0	17

1st Quarter
CHI Hester 92 kickoff return (Gould kick), 0:14
IND Wayne 53 pass from Manning (kick failed), 8:10
CHI Muhammad 4 pass from Grossman (Gould kick), 10:26

2nd Quarter
IND Vinatieri 29 FG, 3:43
IND Rhodes 1 run (Vinatieri kick), 8:51

3rd Quarter
IND Vinatieri 24 FG, 7:34
IND Vinatieri 20 FG, 11:44
CHI Gould 44 FG, 13:46

4th Quarter
IND Hayden 56 interception return (Vinatieri kick), 3:16


Michael Strahan

SUPER BOWL XLII — FEBRUARY 3, 2008

New York Giants 17
New England Patriots 14

Attendance: 71,101

MVP: Eli Manning (QB), Giants
19 of 34 passing, 255 yards, 2 TDs

How They Got There: New York – d. Tampa Bay, 24-14; d. Dallas, 21-17; d. Green Bay, 23-20 in OT (NFC Championship). New England – d. Jacksonville, 31-20; d. San Diego Chargers, 21-12 (AFC Championship).

The Giants became the first NFC wild card team to win the Super Bowl, an achievement made possible by a relentless defense and David Tyree's brilliant 32-yard catch that set up the go-ahead touchdown. Plaxico Burress capped the winning drive with his 13-yard TD grab with 35 seconds to play, shocking a Patriots squad that entered the game 18-0 and had taken the lead just minutes earlier on Randy Moss' six-yard touchdown reception. Michael Strahan (3 tackles, 1 sack, 1 pass defensed), playing his final game, keyed a defense that produced five sacks, while the Giants' ball-control approach on offense included an opening drive that took a Super Bowl-record 9 minutes, 59 seconds.

UNIV. OF PHOENIX STADIUM
Glendale, Ariz.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
New York Giants	3	0	0	14	17
New England	0	7	0	7	14

1st Quarter
NYG Tynes 32 FG, 9:59

2nd Quarter
NE Maroney 1 run (Gostkowski kick), 0:03

4th Quarter
NYG Tyree 5 pass from Manning (Tynes kick), 3:55
NE Moss 6 pass from Brady (Gostkowski kick), 12:18
NYG Burress 13 pass from Manning (Tynes kick), 14:25

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Ben Roethlisberger (7)

SUPER BOWL XLIII — FEBRUARY 1, 2009

Pittsburgh Steelers 27
Arizona Cardinals 23

Attendance: 70,774

MVP: Santonio Holmes (WR), Steelers
9 receptions, 131 yards, 1 TD

How They Got There: Pittsburgh – d. San Diego Chargers, 35-24; d. Baltimore, 23-14 (AFC Championship). Arizona – d. Atlanta, 30-24; d. Carolina, 33-13; d. Philadelphia, 32-25 (NFC Championship).

In a game with a long list of clutch plays, the Steelers saved the biggest for last. Arizona nearly pulled off what would have been an historic comeback, scoring 16 points in a frenzied fourth quarter and taking the lead on Larry Fitzgerald's 64-yard touchdown catch with 2:37 to play. Pittsburgh answered with a 78-yard drive, winning the game on Ben Roethlisberger's six-yard scoring pass to Santonio Holmes. The game also saw the Steelers' James Harrison return an interception 100 yards for a TD on the final play before halftime.

RAYMOND JAMES STADIUM
Tampa, Fla.

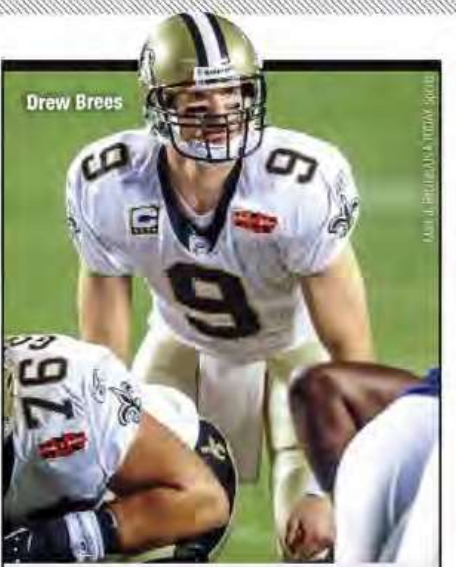
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Pittsburgh	3	14	3	7	27
Arizona	0	7	0	16	23

1st Quarter
PIT Reed 18 FG, 5:15

2nd Quarter
PIT Russell 1 run (Reed kick), 0:59
ARI Patrick 1 pass from Warner (Rackers kick), 6:26
PIT Harrison 100 interception return (Reed kick), 15:00

3rd Quarter
PIT Reed 21 FG, 12:49

4th Quarter
ARI Fitzgerald 1 pass from Warner (Rackers kick), 7:27
ARI Safety, Holding penalty enforced in the end zone, 12:02
ARI Fitzgerald 64 pass from Warner (Rackers kick), 12:23
PIT Holmes 6 pass from Roethlisberger (Reed kick), 14:25


Drew Brees

SUPER BOWL XLIV — FEBRUARY 7, 2010

New Orleans Saints 31
Indianapolis Colts 17

Attendance: 74,059

MVP: Drew Brees (QB), Saints
32 of 39 passing, 288 yards, 2 TDs

How They Got There: New Orleans – d. Arizona, 45-14; d. Minnesota, 31-28 in OT (NFC Championship). Indianapolis – d. Baltimore, 20-3; d. N.Y. Jets, 30-17 (AFC Championship).

Proving it's how you finish that's important, the Saints became the first team to take a three-game losing streak into the playoffs and then win the Super Bowl. They did it with a daring play call to start the second half – an onside kick that was recovered by Jonathan Casillas and set up a six-play drive that Drew Brees finished with a 16-yard TD pass to Pierre Thomas. Jeremy Shockey's fourth-quarter scoring grab moved New Orleans in front to stay, and Tracy Porter put the game away with his 74-yard interception-return touchdown with 3:12 remaining.

SUN LIFE STADIUM
Miami, Fla.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
New Orleans	0	6	10	15	31
Indianapolis	10	0	7	0	17

1st Quarter
IND Stover 38 FG, 7:31
IND Garcon 19 pass from Manning (Stover kick), 14:24

2nd Quarter
NO Hartley 46 FG, 5:26
NO Hartley 44 FG, 15:00

3rd Quarter
NO Thomas 19 pass from Brees (Hartley kick), 3:19
IND Addai 4 run (Stover kick), 8:45
NO FG Hartley 47, 12:59

4th Quarter
NO Shockey 2 pass from Brees (Moore pass from Brees), 9:18
NO Porter 74 interception return (Hartley kick), 11:48

Aaron Rodgers

SUPER BOWL XLV — FEBRUARY 6, 2011

Green Bay Packers 31
Pittsburgh Steelers 25

Attendance: 91,060

MVP: Aaron Rodgers (QB), Packers
24 of 39 passing, 304 yards, 3 TDs

How They Got There: Green Bay – d. Philadelphia, 21-16; d. Atlanta, 48-21; d. Chicago, 21-14 (NFC Championship). Pittsburgh – d. Baltimore, 31-24; d. N.Y. Jets, 24-19 (AFC Championship).

Aaron Rodgers threw three TD passes and Nick Collins returned an interception for another score, sparking the Packers to their fourth Super Bowl title. The Steelers had trailed, 21-3, but tallied two TDs to get close and were on the move again early in the fourth quarter. That's when Green Bay linebacker Clay Matthews stripped the ball from running back Rashard Mendenhall at the Packers 33 and teammate Desmond Bishop recovered. Rodgers then marched Green Bay to a quick touchdown that extended his team's lead to 28-17.

COWBOYS STADIUM
Arlington, Texas

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Pittsburgh	0	10	7	8	25
Green Bay	14	7	0	10	31

1st Quarter
GB Nelson 29 pass from Rodgers (Crosby kick), 11:16
GB Collins 37 interception return (Crosby kick), 11:40

2nd Quarter
PIT Suisham 33 FG, 3:52
GB Jennings 21 pass from Rodgers (Crosby kick), 12:36
PIT Ward 8 pass from Roethlisberger (Suisham kick), 14:21

3rd Quarter
PIT Mendenhall 8 run (Suisham kick), 4:41

4th Quarter
GB Jennings 8 pass from Rodgers (Crosby kick), 3:03
PIT Wallace 25 pass from Roethlisberger (Randle El run), 7:26
GB Crosby 23 FG, 12:53

Eli Manning

SUPER BOWL XLVI FEBRUARY 5, 2012

New York Giants 21
New England Patriots 17

Attendance: 68,658

MVP: Eli Manning (QB), Giants
30 of 40 passing, 296 yards, 1 TD

How They Got There: New York – d. Atlanta, 24-2; d. Green Bay, 37-20; d. San Francisco, 20-17 in OT (NFC Championship). New England – d. Denver, 45-10; d. Baltimore, 23-20 (AFC Championship).

In the first Super Bowl to feature two starting quarterbacks who previously won the big game's MVP award, Eli Manning and the Giants edged Tom Brady and the Patriots, scoring a late TD for the win. Manning became the first QB to open a Super Bowl with nine consecutive completions; Brady later put together a run of 16 completions in a row, breaking another Super Bowl mark. But with time counting down, Manning directed a nine-play, 88-yard drive that moved New York ahead to stay, capped when Ahmad Bradshaw ran for the winning touchdown with just under a minute to play.

LUCAS OIL STADIUM
Indianapolis, Ind.

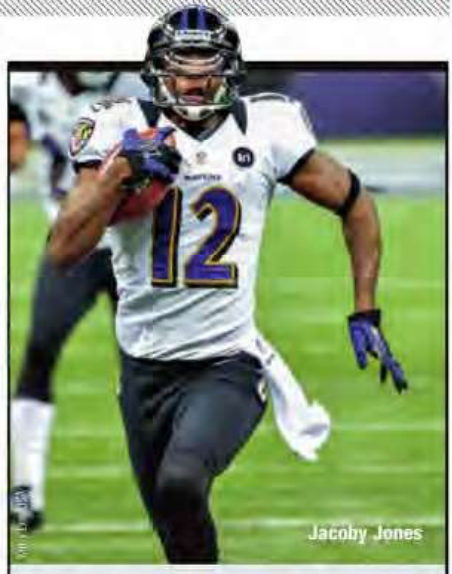
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
New York Giants	9	0	6	6	21
New England	0	10	7	0	17

1st Quarter
NYG Safety, Intentional grounding penalty enforced in end zone, 6:08
NYG Cruz 2 pass from Manning (Tynes kick), 11:36

2nd Quarter
NE Gostkowski 29 FG, 1:12
NE Woodhead 4 pass from Brady (Gostkowski kick), 14:52

3rd Quarter
NE Hernandez 12 pass from Brady (Gostkowski kick), 3:40
NYG Tynes 38 FG, 8:17
NYG Tynes 33 FG, 14:25

4th Quarter
NYG Bradshaw 6 run (run failed), 14:03


Jacoby Jones

SUPER BOWL XLVII FEBRUARY 3, 2013

Baltimore Ravens 34
San Francisco 49ers 31

Attendance: 71,024

MVP: Joe Flacco (QB), Ravens
22 of 33 passing, 287 yards, 3 TDs

How They Got There: Baltimore – d. Indianapolis, 24-9; d. Denver, 38-35 in 2 OTs; d. New England, 28-13 (AFC Championship). San Francisco – d. Green Bay, 45-31; d. Atlanta, 28-24 (NFC Championship).

The Ravens built a big lead, then held on to hand the 49ers their first Super Bowl loss in six appearances. Joe Flacco threw for three first-half touchdowns – capping a spectacular 11-TD, zero-interception postseason – and Jacoby Jones opened the second half with a Super Bowl-record 108-yard kickoff-return touchdown that put Baltimore ahead, 28-6. The 49ers rallied late, but were stopped on downs at the Ravens 5-yard line with under two minutes to play.

MERCEDES-BENZ SUPERDOME
New Orleans, La.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Baltimore	7	14	7	6	34
San Francisco	3	3	17	8	31

1st Quarter
BAL Boldin 13 pass from Flacco (Tucker kick), 4:24
SF Akers 36 FG, 11:02

2nd Quarter
BAL Pitta 1 pass from Flacco (Tucker kick), 7:50
BAL Jones 56 pass from Flacco (Tucker kick), 13:15
SF Akers 27 FG, 15:00

3rd Quarter
BAL Jones 108 kickoff return (Tucker kick), 0:11
SF Crabtree 31 pass from Kaepernick (Akers kick), 7:40
SF Gore 6 run (Akers kick), 10:01
SF Akers 34 FG, 11:50

4th Quarter
BAL Tucker 19 FG, 2:06
SF Kaepernick 15 run (pass failed), 5:03
BAL Tucker 38 FG, 10:41
SF Safety, Koch forced out of end zone, 14:56

Russell Wilson

SUPER BOWL XLVIII FEBRUARY 2, 2014

Seattle Seahawks 43
Denver Broncos 8

Attendance: 82,529

MVP: Malcolm Smith (LB), Seahawks
9 tackles, 69-yard interception return for TD

How They Got There: Seattle – d. New Orleans, 23-15; d. San Francisco, 23-17 (NFC Championship). Denver – d. San Diego Chargers, 24-17; d. New England, 26-16 (AFC Championship).

In what was expected to be the first cold-weather Super Bowl – but instead kicked off in pleasant 49-degree conditions at MetLife Stadium – Seattle cruised past the Broncos. The game featured the quickest points to open a Super Bowl; the Seahawks scored on a safety just 12 seconds into the contest. More big plays followed. Seattle LB Malcolm Smith, the first defender in 11 years to be named the game's MVP, broke things open by bringing back a second-quarter interception 69 yards for a touchdown, and Percy Harvin returned the second half kickoff 87 yards for another Seattle TD, making the score 29-0.

METLIFE STADIUM
East Rutherford, N.J.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Seattle	8	14	14	7	43
Denver	0	0	8	0	8

1st Quarter
SEA Safety, Moreno tackled in end zone, 0:12
SEA Hauschka 31 FG, 4:39
SEA Hauschka 33 FG, 12:44

2nd Quarter
SEA Lynch 1 run (Hauschka kick), 3:00
SEA Smith 69 interception return (Hauschka kick), 11:39

3rd Quarter
SEA Harvin 87 kickoff return (Hauschka kick), 0:12
SEA Kearse 23 pass from Wilson (Hauschka kick), 12:02
DEN D. Thomas 14 pass from Manning (Welker pass from Manning), 15:00

4th Quarter
SEA Baldwin 10 pass from Wilson (Hauschka kick), 3:15

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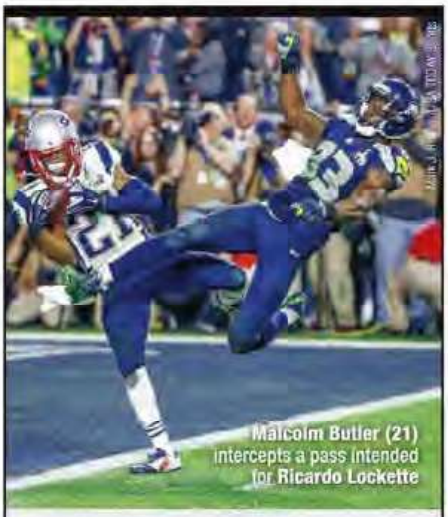

Malcolm Butler (21) intercepts a pass intended for Ricardo Lockette

SUPER BOWL XLIX — FEBRUARY 1, 2015

New England Patriots	28
Seattle Seahawks	24

Attendance: 70,288

MVP: Tom Brady (QB), Patriots
37 of 50 passing, 328 yards, 4 TDs

How They Got There: New England – d. Baltimore, 35-31; d. Indianapolis, 45-7 (AFC Championship). Seattle – d. Carolina, 31-17; d. Green Bay, 28-22 in OT (NFC Championship).

Tom Brady threw four touchdown passes, including the go-ahead score to Julian Edelman with 2:02 remaining, and Malcolm Butler intercepted a pass at the goal line with 20 seconds left to preserve the Patriots' fourth Super Bowl win. Brady's third TD throw was his 12th in the Super Bowl, breaking Joe Montana's record. Still, Seattle nearly pulled off an improbable victory, moving deep into New England territory on Jermaine Kearse's acrobatic 33-yard catch, before Butler came up big two plays later, stepping in front of a pass for the game-saving pickoff.

UNIVERSITY OF PHOENIX STADIUM
Glendale, Ariz.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
New England	0	14	0	14	28
Seattle	0	14	10	0	24

2nd Quarter
- **NE** LaFell 11 pass from Brady (Gostkowski kick), 5:13
- **SEA** Lynch 3 run (Hauschka kick), 12:44
- **NE** Gronkowski 22 pass from Brady (Gostkowski kick), 14:29
- **SEA** Matthews 11 pass from Wilson (Hauschka kick), 14:58

3rd Quarter
- **SEA** Hauschka 27 FG, 3:51
- **SEA** Baldwin 3 pass from Wilson (Hauschka kick), 10:06

4th Quarter
- **NE** Amendola 4 pass from Brady (Gostkowski kick), 7:05
- **NE** Edelman 3 pass from Brady (Gostkowski kick), 12:58

T.J. Ward

SUPER BOWL 50 — FEBRUARY 7, 2016

Denver Broncos	24
Carolina Panthers	10

Attendance: 71,088

MVP: Von Miller (LB), Broncos
6 tackles, 2.5 sacks, 2 forced fumbles

How They Got There: Denver – d. Pittsburgh, 20-13; d. New England, 20-18 (AFC Championship). Carolina – d. Seattle, 31-24; d. Arizona, 49-15 (NFC Championship).

Defense carried the day for the Broncos, who won their third Super Bowl title by flustering the Panthers' offense. Denver recorded seven sacks and linebacker Von Miller forced a pair of fumbles that led to the team's two TDs. The first was scooped up by teammate Malik Jackson in the end zone for a 10-0 lead; the second led to C.J. Anderson's short scoring run. T.J. Ward did his part, too, with seven tackles and one pass defensed. The victory was the 200th in Peyton Manning's career and made him the first starting QB to win Super Bowls with two different franchises, while Gary Kubiak became the first person to win a Super Bowl as a player and a head coach for the same team.

LEVI'S STADIUM
San Francisco, Calif.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Carolina	0	7	0	3	10
Denver	10	3	3	8	24

1st Quarter
- **DEN** McManus 34 FG, 4:17
- **DEN** Jackson 0 fumble return (McManus kick), 8:33

2nd Quarter
- **CAR** Stewart 1 run (Gano kick), 3:35
- **DEN** McManus 33 FG, 8:02

3rd Quarter
- **DEN** McManus 30 FG, 6:42

4th Quarter
- **CAR** Gano 39 FG, 4:39
- **DEN** Anderson 2 run (Manning pass to Fowler), 11:52

Danny Amendola

SUPER BOWL LI — FEBRUARY 5, 2017

New England Patriots	34 (OT)
Atlanta Falcons	28

Attendance: 70,807

MVP: Tom Brady (QB), Patriots
43 of 62 passing, 466 yards, 2 TDs

How They Got There: New England – d. Houston, 34-16; d. Pittsburgh, 36-17 (AFC Championship). Atlanta – d. Seattle, 36-20; d. Green Bay, 44-21 (NFC Championship).

New England staged the biggest comeback in Super Bowl history, rallying from a 25-point deficit late in the third quarter to prevail in overtime for the franchise's fifth championship. It would have been hard to imagine such an outcome after Matt Ryan's six-yard touchdown pass to Tevin Coleman gave Atlanta a 28-3 lead, but Patriots QB Tom Brady – who became the first four-time Super Bowl MVP – made it happen. He threw TD passes to James White and Danny Amendola, Stephen Gostkowski kicked a 33-yard field goal, and a White touchdown run and a two-point conversion then tied it to cap a frantic final 17 minutes of regulation. White won the game with a two-yard TD run on the first possession of overtime.

NRG STADIUM
Houston, Texas

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	OT	F
New England	0	3	6	19	6	34
Atlanta	0	21	7	0	0	28

2nd Quarter
- **ATL** Freeman 5 run (Bryant kick), 2:45
- **ATL** Hooper 19 pass from Ryan (Bryant kick), 6:12
- **ATL** Alford 82 interception return (Bryant kick), 12:39
- **NE** Gostkowski 41 FG, 14:58

3rd Quarter
- **ATL** Coleman 6 pass from Ryan (Bryant kick), 6:29
- **NE** White 5 pass from Brady (Gostkowski kick), 12:54

4th Quarter
- **NE** Gostkowski 33 FG, 5:16
- **NE** Amendola 6 pass from Brady (White run), 9:04
- **NE** White 1 run (Brady pass to Amendola), 14:03

Overtime
- **NE** White 2 run, 3:58

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ahead of the game

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From 1920-1931, the NFL determined its champion by regular-season record, but a first-place tie in 1932 forced a "playoff" and led the league to adopt a championship game format a year later. The AFL began play in 1960, and from 1966-1969 (before the merger), the two leagues held separate title games prior to the Super Bowl.

The Eagles won the 1960 NFL Championship by defeating the Packers, 17-13, at Franklin Field.

NFL Champions

1920..... Akron Pros
1921..... Chicago Staleys
1922..... Canton Bulldogs
1923..... Canton Bulldogs
1924..... Cleveland Bulldogs
1925..... Chicago Cardinals
1926..... Frankford Yellow Jackets
1927..... New York Giants
1928..... Providence Steam Roller
1929..... Green Bay Packers
1930..... Green Bay Packers
1931..... Green Bay Packers

1932..... @ Chicago Bears 9, Portsmouth Spartans 0
1933..... @ Chicago Bears 23, New York Giants 21
1934..... @ New York Giants 30, Chicago Bears 13
1935..... @ Detroit Lions 26, New York Giants 7
1936*..... Green Bay Packers 21, Boston Braves 6
1937..... Washington Redskins 28, @ Chicago Bears 21
1938..... @ New York Giants 23, Green Bay Packers 17
1939..... @ Green Bay Packers 27, New York Giants 0
1940..... Chicago Bears 73, @ Washington Redskins 0
1941..... @ Chicago Bears 37, New York Giants 9
1942..... @ Washington Redskins 14, Chicago Bears 6
1943..... @ Chicago Bears 41, Washington Redskins 21
1944..... Green Bay Packers 14, @ New York Giants 7
1945..... @ Cleveland Rams 15, Washington Redskins 14
1946..... Chicago Bears 24, @ New York Giants 14
1947..... @ Chicago Cardinals 28, Philadelphia Eagles 21
1948..... @ Philadelphia Eagles 7, Chicago Cardinals 0
1949..... Philadelphia Eagles 14, @ Los Angeles Rams 0
1950..... @ Cleveland Browns 30, Los Angeles Rams 28
1951..... @ Los Angeles Rams 24, Cleveland Browns 17
1952..... Detroit Lions 17, @ Cleveland Browns 7
1953..... @ Detroit Lions 17, Cleveland Browns 16
1954..... @ Cleveland Browns 56, Detroit Lions 10
1955..... Cleveland Browns 38, @ Los Angeles Rams 14
1956..... @ New York Giants 47, Chicago Bears 7
1957..... @ Detroit Lions 59, Cleveland Browns 14
1958..... Baltimore Colts 23, @ New York Giants 17 (OT)
1959..... @ Baltimore Colts 31, New York Giants 16
1960..... @ Philadelphia Eagles 17, Green Bay Packers 13
1961..... @ Green Bay Packers 37, New York Giants 0
1962..... Green Bay Packers 16, @ New York Giants 7
1963..... @ Chicago Bears 14, New York Giants 10
1964..... @ Cleveland Browns 27, Baltimore Colts 0
1965..... @ Green Bay Packers 23, Cleveland Browns 12
1966..... Green Bay Packers 34, @ Dallas Cowboys 27
1967..... @ Green Bay Packers 21, Dallas Cowboys 17
1968..... Baltimore Colts 34, @ Cleveland Browns 0
1969..... @ Minnesota Vikings 27, Cleveland Browns 7

AFL Champions

1960..... @ Houston Oilers 24, Los Angeles Chargers 16
1961..... Houston Oilers 10, @ San Diego Chargers 3
1962..... Dallas Texans 20, @ Houston Oilers 17 (OT)
1963..... @ San Diego Chargers 51, Boston Patriots 10
1964..... @ Buffalo Bills 20, San Diego Chargers 7
1965..... Buffalo Bills 23, @ San Diego Chargers 0
1966..... Kansas City Chiefs 31, @ Buffalo Bills 7
1967..... @ Oakland Raiders 40, Houston Oilers 7
1968..... @ New York Jets 27, Oakland Raiders 23
1969..... Kansas City Chiefs 17, @ Oakland Raiders 7

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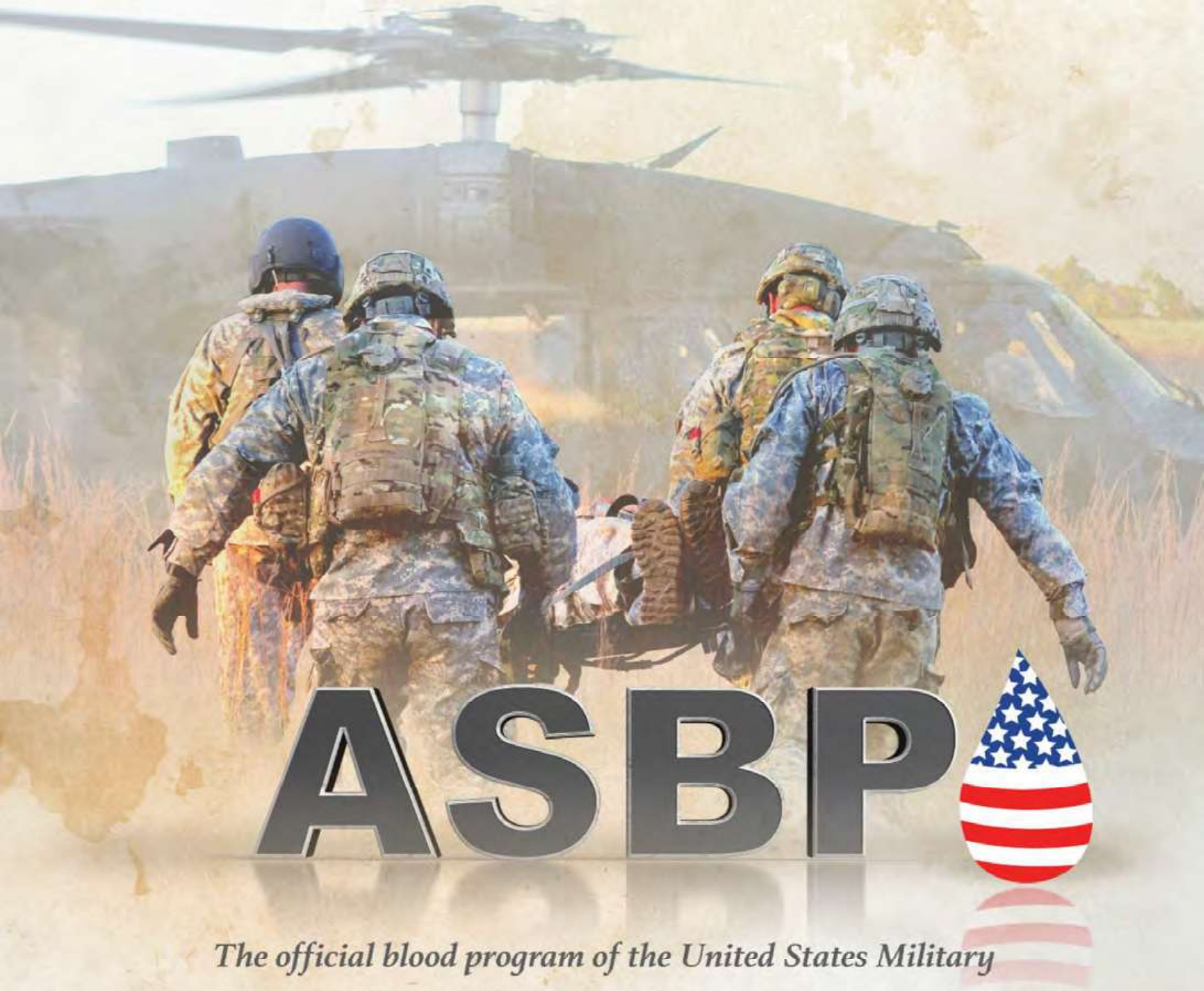

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THIS SEASON, THE NFL CELEBRATED 10 YEARS of getting kids active and healthy through NFL PLAY 60, the league's national youth health and wellness campaign focused on encouraging young fans to get active for at least 60 minutes a day. Since the program's launch, the NFL has committed more than $350 million to youth health and fitness through PLAY 60 programming, grants, and media time for public service announcements. With the help of NFL teams, players, and partner organizations, more than 2,000 PLAY 60 events are held annually, and more than 250 NFL Youth Fitness Zones have been constructed, providing millions of kids with access and resources to play. Thousands of NFL players have served as PLAY 60 Ambassadors and dedicate their time to getting youth in their communities more active through football clinics, school assemblies, PSAs, and other outreach activities.

NFL PLAY 60 Programs

Fuel Up to Play 60, a leading in-school nutrition and physical activity program launched by the NFL and the National Dairy Council, in collaboration with the USDA, is now implemented in 73,000 schools nationwide. As a result of the program, more than 16 million students are getting more physically active during the school day and more than 13 million are making healthier food choices. For the fourth consecutive season, the NFL, through Fuel Up to Play 60, is providing a $10,000 Hometown Grant in each of the NFL's 32 markets to help local school districts and individual schools improve their nutrition and physical activity initiatives. Additionally, 4.3 million students in 4,700 schools nationwide have the opportunity to get active before, during, and after school through the NFL FLAG-In-Schools Program supported by the NFL Foundation and Fuel Up to Play 60. Fuel Up to Play 60 en español, an evolution of the national flagship program, is in its third year and encourages Spanish-speaking communities nationwide to live healthier lifestyles through good nutrition and physical activity.

The NFL and American Heart Association have engaged more than 4.5 million students in physical activity through the **NFL PLAY 60 Challenge**, an in-school curriculum designed to motivate students to achieve 60 minutes or more of physical activity before, during, and after school. The program, funded by the NFL Foundation, provides digital lesson plans and easy-to-use resources to help teachers integrate health and fitness into their daily classroom routines, and has been implemented in nearly 120,000 classrooms nationwide. To download these free resources, visit aha-nflplay60challenge.org. The NFL and American Heart Association have updated the NFL PLAY 60 App, which allows young fans to get active and moving – running, jumping, twisting, and turning – to control their avatars onscreen. Updates include a physical activity-based augmented reality game and collectability features so users can add and train new players on their rosters and compete against friends. Download the NFL PLAY 60 App at NFL.com/PLAY60.

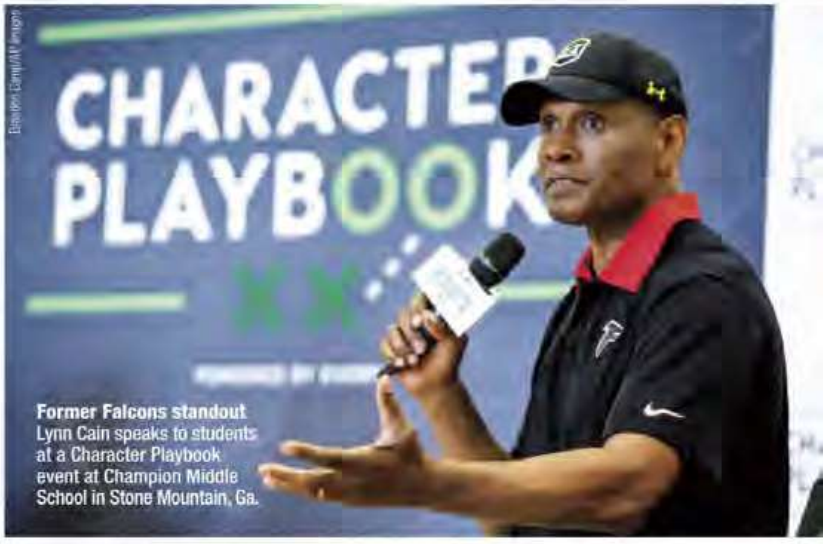
NFL PLAY 60 All-Ability

At the 2017 Pro Bowl, the NFL announced an official partnership with **Special Olympics**, furthering the league's commitment to provide opportunities for athletes of all abilities to get physically active and participate in sports. NFL Foundation funding supports the expansion of Special Olympics Unified Sports Flag Football, which builds inclusive communities by enabling people with and without intellectual disabilities to play on the same team. Grants will support local Special Olympics Programs in 11 states. The NFL and Special Olympics also hosted a Unified Flag Football game at the 2018 Pro Bowl.

NFL PLAY 60 is the "Official Champion of Play" at **St. Jude Children's Research Hospital®**, which is leading the way the world understands, treats, and defeats childhood cancer and other life-threatening diseases. Since 2012, the NFL has raised more than $1 million for St. Jude through donations and the sale of items on NFL Auction to help patients and families cope with serious illnesses through play therapy and peer interaction. This partnership has given patients unique experiences at various NFL events and raised support and awareness for the lifesaving mission of St. Jude: Finding cures. Saving children.®

The NFL and **Shriners Hospitals for Children** continue to provide opportunities for children with different physical abilities to live an active and healthy lifestyle so that no child is left on the sidelines. In 2015, the NFL teamed with Shriners Hospitals to create a free NFL PLAY 60 All-Ability Guide, which includes adaptive activities for children. The All-Ability guide is available at NFL.com/PLAY60. This year, the NFL and Shriners Hospitals continued the NFL PLAY 60 All-Ability impact through PLAY 60 All-Ability clinics in select markets and culminating with an event in Minneapolis leading up to Super Bowl LII.

Forming a Strong Foundation



Former Falcons standout Lynn Cain speaks to students at a Character Playbook event at Champion Middle School in Stone Mountain, Ga.

THE NFL FOUNDATION is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of those touched by the game of football – from players at all levels to communities across the country that support our game.

The NFL Foundation is a strong supporter of youth and high school football, and through a multi-year grant has helped USA Football – the sport's national governing body and a member of the U.S. Olympic Committee – support the development, participation, safety, and values of football. USA Football's Heads Up Football program eclipsed 10,000 youth league and high school enrollments for the first time in 2017. Visit **usafootball.com** for more information.

The Foundation also encourages active and healthy living by providing grants to the American Heart Association and The Cooper Institute. These grants power the NFL PLAY 60 campaigns. NFL clubs also receive grants from the Foundation to provide the NFL PLAY 60 programs in their areas.

The Foundation is deeply committed to supporting NFL players' philanthropic and community efforts and provides multiple grant opportunities to current and former players that help grow our game, support our communities, and empower our youth.

Recently, the NFL Foundation invested more than $4.5 million to help provide character education and social-emotional learning opportunities to students. This includes the InSideOut Initiative and the NFL/United Way Character Playbook program – as well as other programs designed to help young adults foster moral character and navigate complex decision-making and conflict resolution.

InSideOut Initiative

The InSideOut Initiative was co-founded by NFL legend Joe Ehrmann and Minnesota High School League associate director Jody Redman to help transform the "win-at-all-costs" sports culture in high school communities to one that defines and promotes the life-sustaining development of the athlete's inner self.

The NFL Foundation is funding statewide implementation of the InSideOut Initiative with NFL clubs in California, Colorado, Georgia, Indiana, Louisiana, Ohio, Tennessee, and Texas, with plans for further expansion. Learn more at **insideoutinitiative.org**.

Character Playbook

The NFL/United Way Character Playbook program is a digital education program that helps middle school students learn how to cultivate and maintain healthy relationships. The NFL, along with longtime partner United Way Worldwide and digital learning innovator EVERFI, Inc., created this scalable and evidence-based program, which has rolled out in all 32 NFL market communities over the past two years.

Character Playbook consists of six interactive modules that support positive character development, social-emotional learning, and healthy relationships for students in grades 7-9. By the end of the program's first year, approximately 1,300 teachers helped 88,000 students in nearly 30 states complete more than 170,000 hours of learning.

Building on this success, Character Playbook has expanded to 360 more schools, and along with the 2017 NFL season launch of Character Playbook LIVE, is part of a league-wide initiative to engage more students in the important conversation of why character matters. Find out more at **characterplaybook.com**.

SUPER BOWL LII LEGACY GRANT TO BENEFIT MINNESOTA YOUTH

Each year, the Super Bowl serves as a catalyst to support the local community in a significant and lasting way. The partnership between the NFL Foundation, Minnesota Super Bowl Host Committee, and the Minnesota community will benefit the entire state long after Super Bowl LII is played. The NFL, via the NFL Foundation, will support its Super Bowl Legacy Grant initiative through the Minnesota Super Bowl Host Committee's Legacy Fund to help improve the health and wellness of young people in Minnesota. The Legacy Fund is a 501(c)(3) community advised fund of the Minnesota Community Foundation. The Legacy Fund made 52 grants to 52 community projects across Minnesota over the 52 weeks leading up to Super Bowl LII.

The Legacy will invest more than $5 million, of which $1 million is donated by the NFL Foundation to nonprofit organizations throughout the state with a focus on three key areas: fun, fuel, and fundamentals. These grants, chosen in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Health's SHIP program, are focused on improving access and creating healthy behaviors for a lifetime, whether it's access to physical activity or nutritious food.

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Hispanic Fan Engagement

FÚTBOL AMERICANO 2017

THE NFL CONTINUES TO GROW ITS 360-DEGREE PLATFORM of customized offerings for its strong and growing base of more than 28 million Hispanic fans. These offerings range from: Hispanic-focused youth and football education programming; multi-platform Spanish language media partnerships with Universo, ESPN Deportes, FOX Deportes, Entravision, Univision Deportes, and Discovery en Español; customized content via the NFL Español platform; and Latino community outreach efforts throughout the season.

As part of this commitment, the NFL and all 32 member clubs recognize Hispanic Heritage Month with a series of special events spanning Week 2 through Week 6. The NFL continued with the theme of "Feel the Orgullo." In Spanish, "orgullo" means pride. Latino players, fans, and coaches have a strong sense of pride, not only in their culture but in the way they celebrate their team and the NFL.

Also in 2017, the NFL and the Hispanic Heritage Foundation partnered for the seventh annual NFL Hispanic Heritage Leadership Awards presented by Nationwide. The awards recognize the contributions of Hispanic leaders in each NFL market. Winners selected a non-profit organization of their choice that serves the local Hispanic community to receive a $2,000 donation.

This season also marked the third year of the league's Fuel Up to PLAY60 en Español, an evolution of its national flagship program. The platform encourages predominantly Hispanic communities nationwide to live healthier lifestyles through good nutrition and physical activity. This resource also offers Spanish-language content and materials, extending the reach and access of the program to students, teachers, and families across the country.

For the sixth year in a row, the NFL has partnered with Hall of Fame offensive tackle Anthony Muñoz to host 16 NFL PLAY60 Character Camps focused on offering Latino youth opportunities to play and experience the game of football. The camps' mission is to make a positive impact on youth through teaching football skills, emphasizing exercise, and reinforcing the importance of character in athletics and life.

For NFL news, videos, articles, analysis, and more updates in Spanish, visit **NFL.com/Español.**

CONNECTING LOCAL BUSINESS

NFL BUSINESS CONNECT DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

The NFL's Business Connect program is the league's Special Event supplier diversity program charged with helping to grow the economic impact of the Super Bowl in local communities. In partnership with the Super Bowl LII Host Committee, Business Connect identified and worked with more than 400 of Minnesota's premier, event-ready diverse vendors to compete and win contracts with Super Bowl event planners.

The program offered networking, educational, and business development support, including a Playbook Workshop series designed to guide vendors through the Super Bowl bidding process.

Business Connect worked with 45 different business categories representing every trade required to produce a Super Bowl-caliber event. This year, NFL contractor PPW hired 100% of its catering staff from the Business Connect Resource Guide.

Working closely with local vendors to help them showcase their businesses and position them for success, Business Connect hosted a series of Pitch Days and Networking events. Pitch Days allowed vendors to literally pitch their services to Super Bowl event producers. The Networking events generate post-Super Bowl opportunities for vendors by creating one-on-one interactions with Minneapolis-based corporate procurement executives looking to fill 2018 contracts.

The program culminated with the *Super Bowl LII Business Connect: Teamwork, Opportunity and Success* event, honoring the local suppliers and NFL contractors who've best utilized Business Connect throughout the year-and-a-half-long program by creating contracting opportunities for minority-, women-, LGBT-, and veteran-owned businesses.

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A United Stand on Social Issues

Eagles owner Jeffrey Lurie (center) and NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell (left) met with Eagles players to gain perspective on the nation's criminal justice reform issues.

THE NFL EMBRACES its role in unifying communities and serving as a force for positive change. The league and its teams are committed to implementing consistent and thoughtful responses to societal issues by educating the NFL family, instituting transparent league policies, and actively engaging with communities to positively impact society.

The NFL focuses its efforts and resources on social issues that include character education, domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking prevention, as well as its ongoing work with teams and players on social justice.

Over the past year, the NFL has engaged with players, owners and clubs, public officials, law enforcement, as well as many other individuals and organizations, to identify meaningful ways to strengthen communities on issues pertaining specifically to social justice. This unprecedented dialogue has enabled listening and learning on a variety of complex issues. In December 2017, the NFL announced a new and expanded program of community improvement aimed at featuring and supporting the positive efforts of our players relative to social justice issues. The NFL, in conjunction with its players, will focus on three key areas: Education and Economic Advancement; Community-Police Relations; and the Criminal Justice System.

In addition, the league continues to educate its staff, teams, players, and the public about domestic violence and sexual assault, as well as identifying steps that can prevent them before they occur. All NFL and team employees and personnel – more than 6,000 in total – participated in year four of social responsibility education during the 2017 season.

The league also continued its practice of meeting with employees of local domestic violence and sexual assault (DV/SA) organizations in conjunction with major NFL events – meeting with local DV/SA groups in Philadelphia during draft week and in Boston during Kickoff week. The goal of these meetings is to update the groups on the league's social responsibility work and to listen to them on issues facing the field and ways the NFL and its clubs can help.

Additionally, the NFL is continuing its support for its partners at the National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) and the National Domestic Violence Hotline (The Hotline). All 32 NFL clubs continue work in their communities with local domestic violence and sexual assault organizations on activities ranging from abuse intervention programs, crisis center fundraisers, high school healthy relationship assemblies, and local public service campaigns.

The National Domestic Violence
HOTLINE
1.800.799.SAFE (7233) • 1.800.787.3224 (TTY)

THE NFL'S GREEN TEAM: BEHIND-THE-SCENES MVP OF SUPER BOWL LII

Over the past 25 years, the NFL has sponsored and supported environmental projects in each Super Bowl host community. This year's projects, developed in partnership with the Minnesota Super Bowl LII Host Committee, address the environmental impact of Super Bowl events and create a positive legacy in the host community.

Solid Waste Management/Recycling: Solid waste is being diverted from landfills via recycling and material repurposing projects at facilities, including the SB Experience football theme park and the Super Bowl LIVE fan festival. New this year is a ground-breaking "Zero Waste" project in partnership with PepsiCo, SMG, and Aramark to develop a permanent waste diversion process at U.S. Bank Stadium – a "green" legacy of SB LII.

E-Waste Recycling: A public recycling rally this year set a Super Bowl record, collecting 42,000 pounds of e-waste to be responsibly recycled.

Prepared Food Recovery: Extra prepared food from Super Bowl events is being donated to community agencies in partnership with Second Harvest Heartland and other local food recovery organizations.

Material Donation: All reusable materials from Super Bowl events are being donated to local organizations for reuse/repurposing. Materials include office supplies, equipment, building materials, signage, and decor.

Super Kids – Super Sharing: Nearly 100 local schools and YMCAs collected books, sports equipment, games, and school supplies for local children in need. Used cell phones were also collected by NFL sponsor Verizon to support STEM education projects.

Climate Change Initiatives: Emissions from electricity usage at all major Super Bowl venues are being offset using renewable energy certificates, while the Super Bowl LII Urban Forestry Program provided 15 community grants to plant more than 12,000 trees throughout the state.

To learn more, contact Jack Groh at **info@nflenvironment.com**.

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Advancing Player Health and Safety

PLAY SMART PLAY SAFE

THROUGH THE PLAY SMART. PLAY SAFE. initiative, the NFL is working to drive progress in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of injuries, enhance medical protocols, and further improve the way our game is taught and played.

At the heart of the initiative is a pledge of $100 million in support of independent medical research and engineering advancements – and a commitment to support efforts to protect players and make our game safer. This builds on the $100 million that the NFL and its partners are already spending on medical and neuroscience research.

Of the $100 million *Play Smart. Play Safe.* commitment, the league has pledged $60 million over the next five years to the Engineering Roadmap – an effort to improve the understanding of football biomechanics and to create incentives for small businesses, entrepreneurs, innovators, and helmet manufacturers to develop new protective equipment. A total of $40 million will be allocated for medical research, primarily dedicated to neuroscience.

The initiative is organized under four pillars:

- **Advanced Technology:** championing new developments in engineering, biomechanics, and material science designed to better protect against injuries in sports and recreation, as well as the military.
- **Medical Research:** investing in and supporting preeminent experts and institutions to advance progress in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of head injuries.
- **Protecting Players:** making changes on and off the field in an effort to protect the health and safety of every player in the NFL.
- **Sharing Progress:** sharing learnings across all levels of football – and to other sports and society at large.

To learn more, visit **playsmartplaysafe.com**. To read the 2017 NFL Health & Safety Report, visit **annualreport.playsmartplaysafe.com**.

NFL PLAYER CARE FOUNDATION

The NFL Player Care Foundation (PCF) is an independent foundation created in 2007 through a partnership among NFL owners, the NFL Players Association, Pro Football Hall of Fame, and the NFL Alumni Association. It is dedicated to helping retired NFL players improve their quality of life by addressing their medical, emotional, financial, social, and community needs. Resources and referrals to provide assistance are also identified for retired players to support these needs.

Since its inception, PCF has screened more than 5,000 retired players and identified numerous medical issues that were addressed immediately, thus saving lives. In addition to hosting 10 Healthy Body & Mind screening events each year, PCF has granted more than $14.3 million to former players in need through financial grants and educational scholarships.

PCF, supported by the NFL Alumni Association, is proud to partner with one of the nation's premier medical providers – Tulane University School of Medicine – to conduct its annual Super Bowl Week Healthy Body & Mind Screening program. This complimentary national program is open to all former NFL players and includes cardiovascular and prostate screenings and mental health resources and education.

To learn more about the work of the NFL Player Care Foundation, please visit **nflplayercare.com** or email **Dana.Lihan@NFL.com**.

PLAYER CARE FOUNDATION

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A Game for All

IN SUPPORT OF THE NFL'S VISION to grow the game of football and engage youth participants, the "PLAY Football" initiative was launched in 2016.

Last August, PLAY Football teamed with the Pro Football Hall of Fame to kick-off the NFL season, with nearly 1,500 kids lining the streets of Canton, Ohio, passing a ball from the birthplace of football to the steps of the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Also in August, a concerted effort by all 32 NFL clubs and USA Football placed the spotlight on the game's youth coaches, parents, and players for Play Football Month. NFL teams hosted hundreds of youth teams at preseason games, held halftime scrimmages, honored football teams both on and off the field, and conducted youth football camps. With the help of the NFL Foundation, football fundamental camps have been implemented in communities, grant requests are being fulfilled, and coaches and their teams are receiving great experiences.

The 2018 Pro Bowl in Orlando once again served to focus and unify the youth and high school football community while encouraging players of all ages, genders, and levels of play to participate in various activities. There was an increase in the number of FLAG teams competing in the NFL FLAG Championships, and the Play Football initiative shined a light on key influencers in the football community, in particular youth and high school football coaches.

Through USA Football's diligent work, more than one million kids are prioritizing safer play. Its partnership with the NFL has increased focus on educating parents, removing barriers to play, and ensuring that every boy and girl has an entry point to the game. Heads Up Football education continues to grow and NFL FLAG football has more than 340,000 kids playing across the country.

Learn more about the PLAY Football initiative by visiting **PlayFootball.com** or follow **@NFLPlayFootball**. Join the conversation on social media using **#LetsPlayFootball.**

FROM ONE GREAT COACH TO ANOTHER

The Don Shula NFL High School Coach of the Year Award was created to honor exemplary high school football coaches who display the integrity, achievement, and leadership demonstrated by Don Shula, the winningest coach in NFL history and a two-time Super Bowl champion.

Nominations are submitted by the 32 clubs, and the winner is announced during the 2018 Pro Bowl. The NFL Foundation contributes $40,000 in grant awards, with the winner receiving $25,000 ($15,000 going to his school's football program). The winner and runner-up are honored at the Pro Bowl and during Super Bowl week.

The 2016 winner was Randy Allen, the head coach at Highland Park High School in Dallas.

Randy Allen (left) and Cowboys coach Jason Garrett

MADD AND NFL TACKLE DRUNK DRIVING

Each year, drunk driving kills approximately 10,000 people and injures 290,000 more.

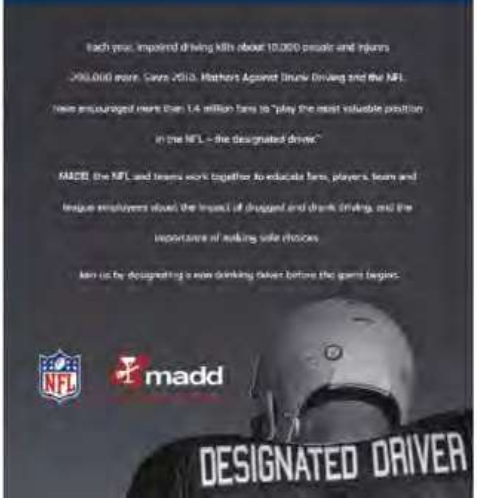
Since 2010, Mothers Against Drunk Driving and the NFL have worked together to help reduce drunk driving and remind fans to play the most valuable position in the NFL – the designated driver.

Over the last five years, more than 1.4 million fans have signed up to be designated drivers, and many NFL teams work with MADD volunteers on gameday to pass out information to fans about the important role of a non-drinking designated driver and how to sign up as one.

The NFL also works with MADD to educate league and team staff as part of annual Social Responsibility education. During the 2017 season, the MADD team – in partnership with the NFL's Player Engagement department – traveled across the country during the Rookie Transition Program to educate rookies about the dangers of drunk driving.

"We are grateful for the opportunity that this partnership provides to build safer communities by helping fans and players understand the importance of designating a non-drinking driver," said Vicki Knox, MADD Interim CEO.

The NFL joins MADD in their important work to create a future of No More Victims®.



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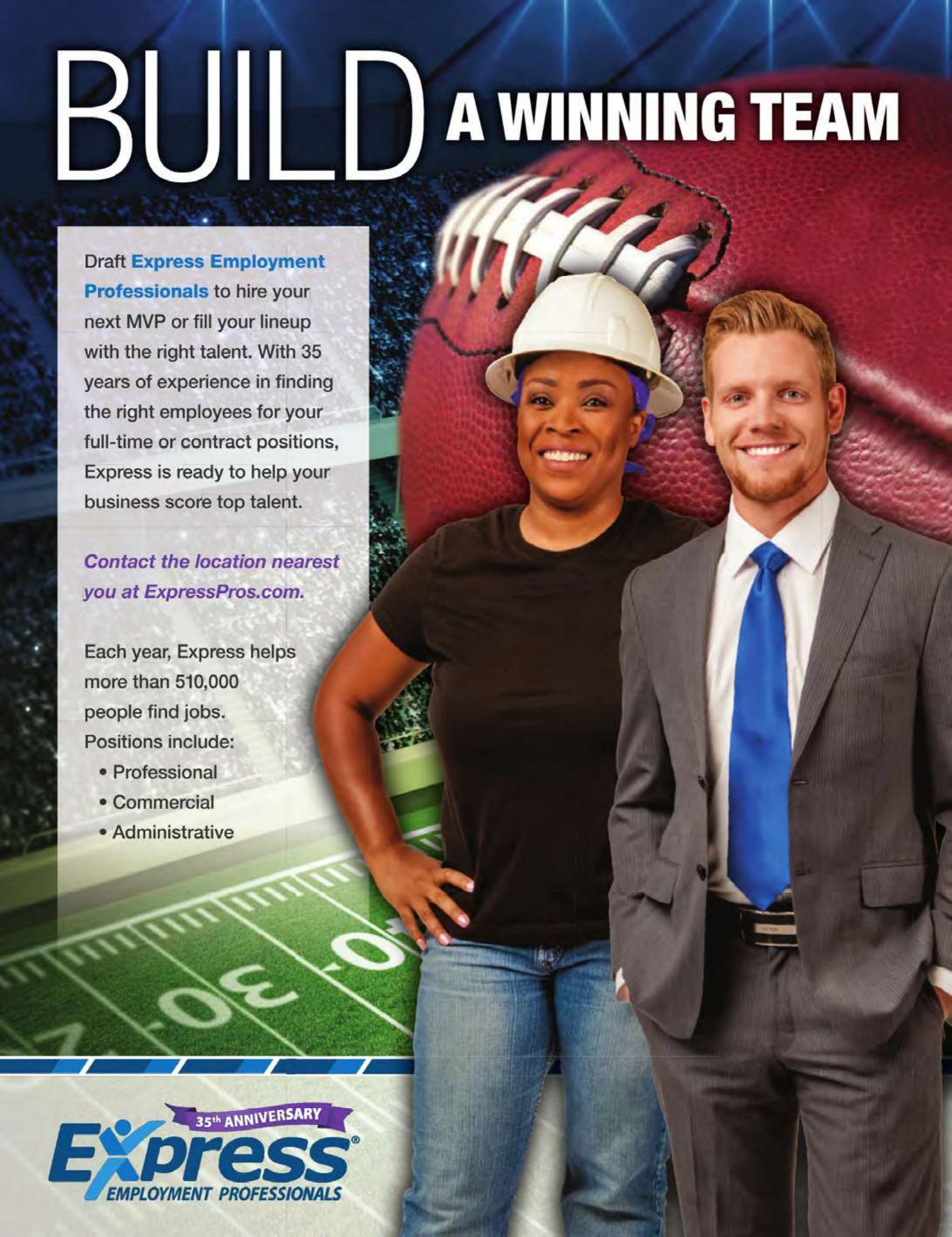

35th ANNIVERSARY
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Crucial Catch

Paul Sancya/AP Images

THE NFL HAS A LONGSTANDING partnership with the American Cancer Society. Together, they have been committed to saving lives from breast cancer and addressing the unequal burden of cancer in underserved communities. In 2017, the NFL and the American Cancer Society expanded this lifesaving partnership, in conjunction with all 32 NFL teams, to have a broader focus on cancer prevention and early detection across multiple cancers. The focus of the Crucial Catch initiative on early detection and prevention serves to help more people catch cancer early, when it might be easier to treat.

Throughout October, NFL games featured multi-colored Crucial Catch branding on the field and in stadiums to represent multiple cancers – including breast, colorectal, lung, cervical, prostate, and childhood – all to help provide education and raise awareness for how cancer has impacted the lives of our communities on many levels.

Since 2009, the partnership has raised more than $18 million in support of the American Cancer Society and its mission to save lives, celebrate lives, and lead the fight for a world without cancer. Money raised through the Crucial Catch program funds grants to help people in underserved communities receive potentially lifesaving screening resources.

With the NFL's contributions, the American Cancer Society's Community Health Advocates implementing Nationwide Grants for Empowerment and Equity (CHANGE) program has awarded grants to more than 80 health system partners to address cancer prevention, screening, and early detection in underserved communities. In 2017, all 32 NFL team markets received a $75,000 CHANGE grant to fund screenings and educational events with local health partners. Since 2012, these community partners have provided 520,000 evidence-based interventions, including patient education, screening reminders, and navigation.

Additionally, the NFL and the American Cancer Society teamed up to expand prevention efforts with the introduction of The Defender, a web-based tool that provides personalized tips on how to reduce your risk of cancer. Launched in October 2017, The Defender was used by thousands of individuals to assess their risk during October's Crucial Catch month. The Defender is available year-round online and on web-enabled mobile devices at **TheDefender.Cancer.org.**

For more information about the Crucial Catch program, fans can visit **NFL.com/CrucialCatch**.

THE MOST IMPORTANT STATS TO KNOW

Mike Haynes

This past year, The Urology Care Foundation and the NFL teamed up for a ninth season to raise awareness about prostate cancer through the Know Your Stats® campaign. Mike Haynes, widely recognized as one of the game's all-time greatest defensive backs, is a campaign spokesperson, prostate cancer survivor, and Pro Football Hall of Fame member who travels the country with other NFL legends to raise funds for prostate cancer research and drive home the message that early detection is key to catching and treating this disease.

"Before I was diagnosed with prostate cancer, I had no idea I was at risk for this disease," Haynes said. "Now, as a cancer survivor and someone who benefitted from finding my cancer early, I share my journey because I want other men to know how important early detection is and how saving men's lives simply starts with knowing your risk and talking to your doctor."

What You Need to Know:

- Prostate cancer is the second most-common cancer in men;
- A man is told he has prostate cancer every 3.1 minutes;
- If you are ages 55 to 69, talk to your doctor about prostate screening;
- Know Your Risk. Some men are at higher risk for prostate cancer. Talk to your doctor about prostate cancer screening if you are ages 40 to 54 years and you are African American and/or have a father, brother, or son who has had prostate cancer.

The Urology Care Foundation and the NFL continue to build upon a relationship that started nearly 10 years ago, when the NFL began implementing prostate cancer screenings for retired players.

"We are extremely thankful for our partnership with the NFL and Mike in helping to address such an important issue in men's heath," said Richard A. Memo, MD, Chair of the Urology Care Foundation. "By encouraging men and their loved ones to talk about prostate cancer, we can help spread awareness about this disease that when found early, has a relative survival rate of nearly 100 percent."

Don't sit on the sidelines. Know your risk. Talk to your doctor.

For more information about prostate cancer, visit **KnowYourStats.org**.

Urology Care Foundation

Know Your Stats
About Prostate Cancer®

NFL SALUTE TO SERVICE AWARD PRESENTED BY USAA

The NFL Salute to Service Award presented by USAA is given annually to an NFL player, coach, alumni, or team personnel member who demonstrates an exemplary commitment to honoring and supporting the military community.

The award is presented during Super Bowl week and recognized at the *NFL Honors* awards show.

Team nominations are submitted in October. They are evaluated based on the positive effect of the individual's efforts on the military community, the type of service conducted, the thoroughness of the program, and level of commitment. Past winners include: late Tennessee Titans owner K.S. "Bud" Adams Jr. (2011), Chicago Bears defensive back Charles Tillman (2012), Baltimore Ravens head coach John Harbaugh (2013), Carolina Panthers defensive end Jared Allen (2014), Tampa Bay Buccaneers wide receiver Vincent Jackson (2015), and Atlanta Falcons head coach Dan Quinn (2016).

Dan Quinn

As part of receiving the award, a $25,000 contribution is made by USAA in the winner's honor to the aid societies representing all five military branches.

USAA is the Official Military Appreciation Sponsor of the NFL. Throughout the season, USAA invites military members to participate in exclusive experiences, including hosting military at training camp events, enabling on-base team practices, hosting military at Salute to Service games, and encouraging fans to demonstrate their own military appreciation.

Giving Back to Our Service Members

EACH YEAR, THE NFL and its 32 teams come together to honor and support members of the military as part of the NFL's Salute to Service. The league's year-round military appreciation efforts culminate in November with NFL Salute to Service games and other special events honoring veterans, active duty service members, and their families.

The NFL works with its core military nonprofit partners to show gratitude for all those who have served our country. The NFL, along with its partners, is proud to support the Pat Tillman Foundation, TAPS, USO, and Wounded Warrior Project to fund programs and provide resources that positively impact veterans and active-duty military members and their families. Since 2011, more than $17 million has been raised through Salute to Service to support the league's military nonprofit partners.

- **PAT TILLMAN FOUNDATION –** The NFL partners with the Pat Tillman Foundation to honor leaders who exemplify Pat's enduring legacy of service. The NFL's contributions support the Tillman Scholar program, which provides active-duty service members, veterans, and military spouses with academic scholarships, a national network, and professional development opportunities so they are empowered to make an impact. With the NFL's support, more than 500 Tillman Scholars are now pursuing careers in medicine, business, law, science, education, and the arts. The NFL's contributions also support the annual Tillman Honors and Pat Tillman Leadership Summit, which convene the Tillman Scholars to network, collaborate, and present solutions to challenges facing the country through keynotes, panels, and workshops with industry, non-profit, and community leaders.
- **TAPS (TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS) –** The NFL partners with TAPS to support the families of the fallen and military mentors. NFL funding supported the creation and implementation of a team4taps program at the 2017 and 2018 Pro Bowls. Also in 2017, the NFL funded a TAPS International Program to support the reconciliation of US military survivors with survivors abroad, as well as youth mentorship and counseling programs, including Good Grief Camps.
- **UNITED SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS (USO) –** The NFL's tradition of supporting America's armed services includes a more than 50-year partnership with the USO. In September 2016, the NFL announced a new $5 million commitment to the military nonprofit to aid new projects that provide services and programs at more than 200 USO locations worldwide. Through the lens of football, the NFL and USO strive to keep our service members connected to the things they hold dear: family, home, and country. Many programs, including Flag Football and USO2GO deliveries, are a part of this enhanced partnership.
- **WOUNDED WARRIOR PROJECT® –** The NFL partners with Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) to connect wounded veterans with free programs and resources that empower them to live their lives to the fullest, on their own terms. This support has enabled WWP to fund the expansion of combat stress recovery programs. These critical mental health programs aid veterans dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the transition and recovery process. Additionally, with the NFL's support, Wounded Warrior Project has hosted numerous Physical Health and Wellness expos across the country for wounded veterans and their family members.

For more information on these programs, please visit **nfl.com/salute**.

THE DEFENSE RISES

SUPER BOWL HISTORY IS FILLED WITH STORIES OF UNHERALDED DEFENSES THAT HAVE STEPPED UP TO CARRY THE DAY.

BY KIMBERLY JONES

When the Giants shocked the Patriots in Super Bowl XLII, defense was the big – if now forgotten – story of the game.

Paul Spinelli/AP Images

OF COURSE we remember the famous defenses: the Steelers of the '70s, the 1985 Bears, the 2000 Ravens, and, more recently, the Seahawks and the Broncos.

They're easy to recall, because those teams staked their name to a unit that carried them all season and then shined even brighter in the Super Bowl. It takes a deeper dive to appreciate other Super Bowl defensive efforts, those that have been overlooked, overshadowed, or even forgotten over time.

One doesn't have to go further back than last year to see a potential case study. For while Tom Brady and the Patriots' offense furiously rallied from a 28-3 deficit in Super Bowl LI, the team's defense was taking on an equally imposing challenge: holding the high-powered Falcons scoreless for the final 23 minutes, 31 seconds of regulation. Allowing any points would have made that impossible comeback, well, impossible.

A decade ago, the Patriots were on the other side of a defensive gem that, not surprisingly, takes second billing in most fans' minds. Super Bowl XLII is best remembered for the "Helmet Catch," the miraculous completion from Eli Manning to David Tyree that set up the last-minute Giants touchdown in their stunning victory over undefeated New England. Yet it took a monumental defensive performance against arguably the greatest offense ever assembled for that play to mean anything.

Famously, Giants wide receiver Plaxico Burress – who caught the game-winning TD pass – had predicted that his underdog team would prevail over the Patriots by the score of 23-17.

That got the attention of Brady ("We're only going to score 17 points?" he asked incredulously), but seemed destined to be the stuff of pregame folly. The Patriots, after all, averaged 36.8 points per game and Brady had thrown for 50 touchdowns during the regular season.

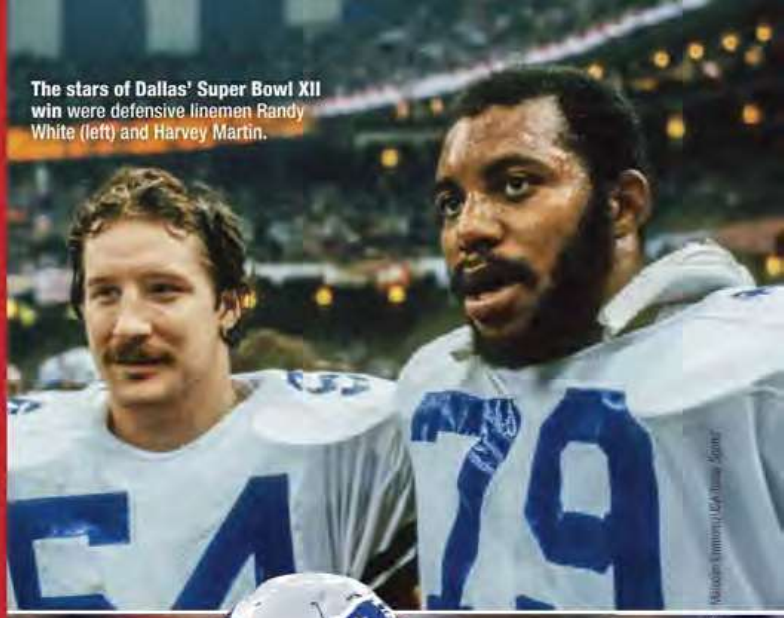
The Giants' defense, however, proved Burress a soothsayer, even knocking three points off his prediction. Thanks to an attack-mode, blitz-heavy game plan devised by defensive coordinator Steve Spagnuolo, the Giants won, 17-14. Defenders Michael Strahan (playing in his final game), Justin Tuck, and Osi Umenyiora rushed Brady in waves, sacking him five times and unnerving him from start to finish. Tuck, with two sacks, two quarterback hits, and a forced fumble, could have been the game's Most Valuable Player. The honor instead went to Manning.

"The MVP of Super Bowl XLII was Justin Tuck," Strahan says. "Not to take anything away from Eli because without him we don't win, but what Tuck did was absolutely amazing."

A similar storyline would play out when the teams met again four years later in Super Bowl XLVI. Manning's terrific late-game pass to a lunging Mario Manningham led to the game-winning touchdown, but was only possible because of another standout defensive performance led by Tuck. The normally explosive Patriots didn't score over the game's final 26 minutes, allowing the Giants to rally for a 21-17 decision.

Says Manning: "Our defense played their tails off for us to win those two games."

But while great defense may be appreciated, it doesn't always get recognized. Manning was the MVP of that game, too. In fact, just 10 defensive players have been named Super Bowl MVP, and two of those came in the same year when Cowboys defensive linemen Harvey Martin and Randy White shared the honor in Super Bowl XII.



The stars of Dallas' Super Bowl XII win were defensive linemen Randy White (left) and Harvey Martin.

While the Patriots' offense was pouring on the points in Super Bowl LI, Trey Flowers (2.5 sacks) and the defense were doing their part as well.

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Dallas' Doomsday II Defense was relentless that day, forcing eight turnovers and limiting the Broncos to 156 total yards. The working media wanted to award the MVP to the entire Dallas defense, but ultimately decided to split the honor between Martin and White.

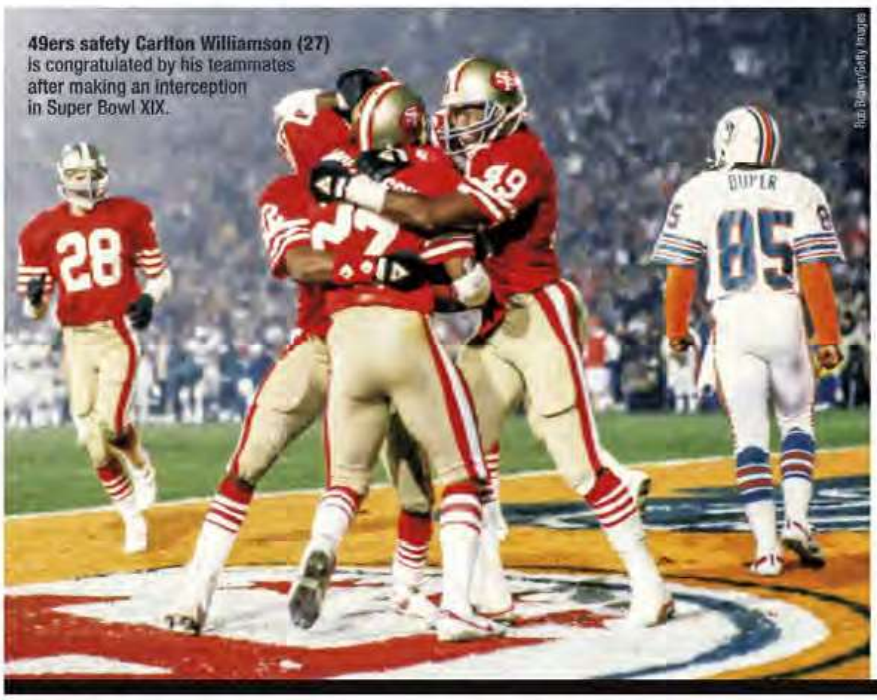
Of all Super Bowl teams, Cowboys defenders have been honored the most … even in defeat. Chuck Howley, one of the game's great coverage linebackers, was named MVP of Super Bowl V after he intercepted two passes and forced a fumble in Dallas' 16-13 setback to the Colts. He remains the only player from a losing team to receive the award.

Showering in the locker room when teammates told him he had won the honor, Howley simply replied that he would have rather won the game. One year later, he did. And he again played a big part, grabbing an interception and recovering a fumble in the Cowboys' 24-3 victory over Miami in Super Bowl VI. This time, however, quarterback Roger Staubach was the MVP, despite the Dolphins becoming (and remaining) the only team not to score a touchdown in the Super Bowl.

In the 1990s, when the Cowboys won three Super Bowls in four seasons, Troy Aikman, Emmitt Smith, and Michael Irvin were household names. Less so was Larry Brown, who even on defense played in the shadow of fellow cornerback Deion Sanders. But in Super Bowl XXX, it was Brown, thanks to two interceptions of Steelers quarterback Neil O'Donnell that set up Cowboys touchdowns, who won MVP honors.

"We did a lot of blitzing in that game," Brown said afterwards. "One thing (defensive backs coach) Mike Zimmer told us was, 'Be where you're supposed to be.' A lot of times, guys get into trouble because they get out of position."

Some stellar defensive efforts end up being victims of circumstances beyond their control. When the Jets upset the Colts, 16-7, in Super Bowl III, they intercepted quarterbacks Earl Morrall and Johnny Unitas a total of four times. But the game is singularly known for Joe Namath's "guarantee" of victory three days before kickoff.



49ers safety Carlton Williamson (27) is congratulated by his teammates after making an interception in Super Bowl XIX.

Rob Brown/Getty Images

Super Bowl XVII's recurring highlight is of MVP John Riggins' 43-yard TD rumble that gave the Redskins a fourth-quarter lead. But one has to credit the team's varied defensive schemes and blitzes that held the Dolphins to 176 yards of total offense – and just 34 yards and not a single pass completion in the second half – for that victory as well.

When Joe Montana and Dan Marino squared off in Super Bowl XIX, it was billed – even though it was just Marino's second season – as a battle of two of the game's premier passers. Both QBs lived up to the billing, throwing for more than 300 yards in the game, but the difference was the 49ers' defense.

These Defenses Dominated the Day

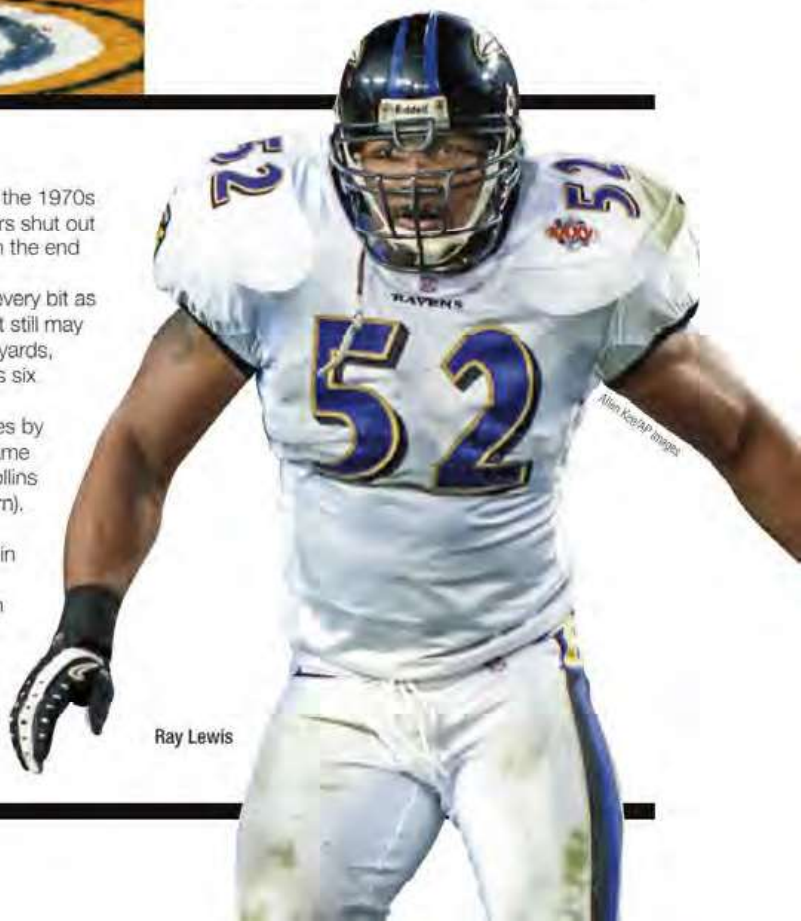
Pittsburgh's Steel Curtain sent shivers down opponents' spines throughout the 1970s and was perhaps never more dominant than in Super Bowl IX, when the Steelers shut out the Vikings' offense, intercepted Fran Tarkenton three times, and sacked him in the end zone for the first safety in Super Bowl history.

A decade later, the Bears' defense didn't enjoy the same longevity, but was every bit as feared during the 1985 season, capped with a Super Bowl XX performance that still may be the game's best. Chicago recorded seven sacks, yielded just seven rushing yards, and didn't allow Patriots starting quarterback Tony Eason to complete any of his six passes. Defensive end Richard Dent was the game's MVP.

The 2000 Ravens put themselves in any discussion about dominant defenses by allowing just 165 points during the regular season – still the fewest in the 16-game era – and then smothering the Giants in Super Bowl XXXV, intercepting Kerry Collins four times and not allowing a point (New York's lone score came on a kickoff return). Linebacker Ray Lewis earned game MVP honors.

Seattle's "Legion of Boom" was similarly stingy during the 2013 season, and in Super Bowl XLVIII simply overwhelmed a Broncos offense that was the first in NFL history to score more than 600 points. The Seahawks recorded a safety on Denver's first play from scrimmage, later added a touchdown on MVP Malcolm Smith's 69-yard interception return, and built a 36-0 lead before allowing a point.

The Broncos took that lesson and applied it in 2015, building a rock-solid unit that would be at its best in Super Bowl 50 when game MVP Von Miller had two strip sacks of Carolina's Cam Newton – part of a six-sack, four-turnover effort by the defense – that led directly to 14 Denver points.



Ray Lewis

Allen Kee/AP Images

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Kelvin Hayden secured the Colts' Super Bowl XLI win over the Bears with a 56-yard interception-return touchdown.

After the Dolphins took an early lead, San Francisco coach Bill Walsh told defensive coordinator George Seifert to switch from their normal 3-4 alignment to the 49ers' version of the nickel defense: adding pass-rusher Fred Dean to the line, leaving speedy Keena Turner as the only linebacker, and adding Tom Holmoe and Jeff Fuller to the Pro Bowl secondary of Ronnie Lott, Eric Wright, Dwight Hicks, and Carlton Williamson.

The 49ers won, 38-16. Miami didn't score in the second half and, for the first time all season, its offense was held below 21 points. After the game, Hicks presented the game ball to Walsh.

Super Bowl XXXVI was supposed to be the coronation of the "Greatest Show on Turf," a Rams team that averaged 31.4 points per game, featured quarterback Kurt Warner and running back Marshall Faulk, and routinely turned games into track meets. Instead, it served as the launch point of the Patriots' dynasty.

Almost forgotten is the defensive game plan coach Bill Belichick and his staff devised. The Rams managed just three points in the first three quarters, and although they outgained the Patriots, 427-267, in total yards and rallied to tie the game late in the fourth quarter, the difference was turnovers. New England committed none and forced three, which produced 17 points.

"We shocked the world," cornerback Otis Smith said after the Patriots' 20-17 win.

As Warner acknowledged years later: "A great game is determined by great players making big plays at big moments."

That's what the Super Bowl is all about. Even if some of those players are unexpected heroes, such as the Raiders' Rod Martin in Super Bowl XV. He intercepted Eagles quarterback Ron Jaworski three times, still a Super Bowl record. Not bad for a linebacker drafted 317th overall in 1977.

"A lot of people may not know all the MVPs who have played in the Super Bowl," says Martin, who lost out to quarterback Jim Plunkett for Most Valuable Player honors, "but they know I had three interceptions when I played in the game."

Likewise, the Colts' Kelvin Hayden stepped up big in Super Bowl XLI. Playing in the South Florida rain, Peyton Manning won his first Super Bowl and was game MVP. But Indianapolis' defense told the story, limiting the Bears to three points after the first quarter and forcing five turnovers, including Hayden's 56-yard interception-return touchdown.

A 23-year-old cornerback who had started one game in his first two NFL seasons, Hayden was on the field only because starter Nick Harper was injured. Harper presciently told Hayden, "Hey, you're going to make a big play."

A Chicago native, Hayden made that play against his hometown team. "Come tomorrow," he said after the game, "I'm back to being a Bears fan."

Still, there are times when a stalwart defensive effort just can't be ignored. The 1972 Dolphins were chasing perfection in Super Bowl VII and had the opportunity, fittingly, to cap their 17-0 season by beating the Redskins, 17-0. But a botched field goal attempt, replayed thousands of times and known by any football fan from the Baby Boomer generation, resulted in a Washington touchdown.

The Dolphins instead settled for a 14-7 win, and safety Jake Scott, who had two interceptions, was named MVP. It was the perfect way for Miami's No-Name defense – so called because it paled in comparison to the Dolphins' offensive stars – to end the season.

***Kim Jones** is a reporter at NFL Network. Her favorite Super Bowl Halftime Show is Prince singing "Purple Rain" in the South Florida rain at Super Bowl XLI.*

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MARCH TO MINN

ALL 32 NFL TEAMS EMBARKED ON A JOURNEY WITH ONE DESTINATION IN MIND: SUPER BOWL LII. FOLLOW THEIR PATHS IN THIS 2017 SEASON RECAP.

ESOTA

Al Tielemans/AP Images

Paul Spinelli/AP Images

FIRST QUARTER
WEEKS 1–4

CHIEFS CHARGE OUT OF THE GATE

Blazing start includes Kickoff Weekend win over Super Bowl LI champion Patriots

Four weeks into the 2017 NFL season, just one team remained undefeated: the Kansas City Chiefs. The defending AFC West champs were 4-0, thanks to consecutive victories over the Patriots, Eagles, Chargers, and Redskins.

The season started with a fast-paced thriller in Foxborough, where the Chiefs prevailed, 42-27, spoiling a night when New England raised its Super Bowl LI banner. Keying the win was Kareem Hunt, who scored three times – including the go-ahead touchdown on a 78-yard catch early in the fourth quarter – and whose 246 total yards set an NFL record for a pro debut. Just as impressive, Alex Smith became the first quarterback to throw for 300-plus yards, four TDs, and no interceptions against a Bill Belichick-coached team at Gillette Stadium.

Against Philadelphia, the Chiefs recorded six sacks, while Travis Kelce's 15-yard TD reception snapped a fourth-quarter tie in what became a 27-20 victory. In Week 3's 24-10 decision over the Los Angeles Chargers, Smith fired two early touchdown passes, Hunt scored on a 69-yard run, and Terrance Mitchell grabbed two of the team's three interceptions.

Kansas City then showed its resolve in a Week 4 win over Washington, rallying from a 10-point deficit and pulling ahead on Harrison Butker's late field goal. The Chiefs would add a touchdown on the game's final play to account for the 29-20 final.

"We got strong as the game went on," said linebacker Derrick Johnson, who made three tackles against the Redskins. "I am proud of the guys. We showed that we're a second-half team. You want them all to be blowouts, you want them all to be easy, but in these games you learn what kind of character you have on the team.

"There are going to be a few more times when games are going to be

Explosive rookie **Kareem Hunt** was a big reason for Kansas City's strong start. He had three 100-yard rushing games and scored six TDs in the team's first four games.

NFL STANDINGS - THROUGH WEEK 4

AFC EAST	W-L-T	PCT	PF	PA
Buffalo	3-1-0	.750	73	54
N.Y. Jets	2-2-0	.500	75	92
New England	2-2-0	.500	129	128
Miami	1-2-0	.333	25	57

AFC NORTH	W-L-T	PCT	PF	PA
Pittsburgh	3-1-0	.750	90	59
Baltimore	2-2-0	.500	60	80
Cincinnati	1-3-0	.250	64	67
Cleveland	0-4-0	.000	63	107

AFC SOUTH	W-L-T	PCT	PF	PA
Jacksonville	2-2-0	.500	109	74
Houston	2-2-0	.500	110	88
Tennessee	2-2-0	.500	100	126
Indianapolis	1-3-0	.250	71	136

AFC WEST	W-L-T	PCT	PF	PA
Kansas City	4-0-0	1.000	122	77
Denver	3-1-0	.750	98	74
Oakland	2-2-0	.500	91	79
L.A. Chargers	0-4-0	.000	72	93

NFC EAST	W-L-T	PCT	PF	PA
Philadelphia	3-1-0	.750	103	92
Dallas	2-2-0	.500	94	97
Washington	2-2-0	.500	91	89
N.Y. Giants	0-4-0	.000	60	95

NFC NORTH	W-L-T	PCT	PF	PA
Detroit	3-1-0	.750	99	70
Green Bay	3-1-0	.750	102	81
Minnesota	2-2-0	.500	79	76
Chicago	1-3-0	.250	61	104

NFC SOUTH	W-L-T	PCT	PF	PA
Atlanta	3-1-0	.750	104	89
Carolina	3-1-0	.750	78	70
Tampa Bay	2-1-0	.667	71	64
New Orleans	2-2-0	.500	93	78

NFC WEST	W-L-T	PCT	PF	PA
L.A. Rams	3-1-0	.750	142	105
Seattle	2-2-0	.500	94	77
Arizona	2-2-0	.500	74	91
San Francisco	0-4-0	.000	66	94

▲ The league's youngest head coach, 31-year-old **Sean McVay**, had the Rams off to a 3-1 start behind an offense averaging 35.5 ppg.

▶ With strong safety **Micah Hyde** inspiring a tenacious defense, the Bills were making noise in the AFC East.

▲ Fans at London's Wembley Stadium were treated to the Jaguars' special UK mascot, **Union Jaxson**, during the team's Week 3 win over the Ravens.

like this," he added, "and we're going to have that confidence we can pull it out."

Through four games, the Chiefs held a league-best plus-41 point differential in the fourth quarter, while Hunt's 659 scrimmage yards marked the most in a player's first four games since Billy Sims amassed 745 for the Lions in 1980.

WEEK 1

All four NFC North teams opened their seasons at home – with three of them coming away victorious. At U.S. Bank Stadium, the site of Super Bowl LII, the Vikings upended the Saints, 29-19, behind the precise passing of Sam Bradford (27 of 32, 346 yards, 3 TDs). Stefon Diggs was among his favorite targets, making seven receptions for 93 yards, including two first-half scoring grabs. "I just try to run a route, catch the pass, but Sam, you know, he's a slinger," Diggs said. In Green Bay, the Packers held the ball for nearly 40 minutes and limited the Seahawks to just 225 total yards in posting a 17-9 victory. "This really started with our defense," said Packers coach Mike McCarthy. "It starts on the line of scrimmage. We were in the backfield a bunch." Lions fans watched Matthew Stafford direct his 27th career game-winning fourth-quarter drive, part of a day that saw him throw for 292 yards and four TDs in Detroit's 35-23 victory over Arizona. And while the Falcons edged the Bears, 23-17, the hosts did put a scare into the defending NFC champs, reaching the 5-yard line in the final minute before being stopped on downs.

▶ **Opening Week Extras:** Calais Campbell had four sacks and Dante Fowler Jr. returned a fumble 53 yards for a touchdown in Jacksonville's 29-7 win over Houston … Raiders kicker Giorgio Tavecchio became the first player in league history to make two fields goals of at least 50 yards in his NFL debut, hitting a pair of 52-yarders in Oakland's 26-16 decision over Tennessee … In Atlanta's win over the Bears, Julio Jones hauled in four receptions, giving him 501 in his 80-game career, tying Anquan Boldin for the fewest games needed to reach that milestone in NFL history … Three head coaches won their Kickoff Weekend debuts: Denver's Vance Joseph (24-21 over the L.A. Chargers); Buffalo's Sean McDermott (21-12 over the N.Y. Jets); and the L.A. Rams' Sean McVay (46-9 over Indianapolis).

NEXT GEN GEM

Trevor Siemian recorded the highest average air distance on his completions (23.3 yards) of any QB in Week 1, finishing 17 of 28 for 219 yards in the Broncos' victory over the Chargers.

WEEK 2

The Broncos continued their trend of fast starts, handling the Cowboys, 42-17, to begin 2-0 for the fifth straight season. Trevor Siemian threw for 231 yards and four touchdowns, two of them to Emmanuel Sanders, and C.J. Anderson ran for a score and also caught a 16-yard TD pass that put Denver ahead for good. "It's still so early," said Siemian, who led the Broncos' offense to its highest output since 2014. "We're only two games into the season. I've seen how quickly things can change in this league." Defense played a huge role, too, with Denver limiting Dallas to 40 rushing yards, Von Miller recording two sacks, and Aqib Talib closing out the scoring with a 103-yard interception-return touchdown, his 10th career pick-6.

▶ **Second Takes:** Jamal Agnew recorded the season's first kick-return touchdown, bringing back a punt 88 yards for a score in the Lions' 24-10 win over the Giants … Two individual milestones were accomplished in defeats: Aaron Rodgers became the 11th player in NFL history to throw 300 career touchdowns – and reached it in the fewest attempts

FIRST QUARTER
WEEKS 1-4

Cornerback **Aqib Talib** puts the finishing touches on his 103-yard interception-return TD during the Broncos' Week 2 win over Dallas.

QB **Deshaun Watson** fueled a Texans offense that erupted for a franchise-record 57 points in the team's Week 4 victory over Tennessee.

George Bridges/AP Images

With 26 receptions through four weeks, tight end **Zach Ertz** was proving to be a big target for the Eagles.

(4,742) – during Green Bay's 34-23 setback at Atlanta, while the Chargers' Antonio Gates recorded his 112th career TD reception, passing Tony Gonzalez for the most by a tight end in league history, in his team's 19-17 loss to Miami … Tom Brady paced New England's 36-20 victory at New Orleans by posting his 52nd career game with at least three touchdown passes and no interceptions, becoming the NFL's all-time leader in that category … For the second straight week, the Ravens intercepted four passes – with Brandon Carr and Lardarius Webb each recording their second of the year – in a 24-10 win over Cleveland.

NEXT GEN GEM

The Eagles' **Jake Elliott** kicked a 61-yard field goal to defeat the Giants, 27-24, in Week 3. The field goal, the longest ever made by an NFL rookie, had an initial airspeed estimated at 100 mph.

WEEK 3

The league's two youngest coaches – the Rams' Sean McVay (31 years old) and the 49ers' Kyle Shanahan (age 37) – saw their clubs square off in what became a Thursday night thriller. QB Jared Goff threw for 292 yards and three touchdowns, and Todd Gurley rushed for 113 yards in pacing the Rams' 41-39 victory. Still, the visitors had to turn back a late two-point conversion attempt and a final San Francisco drive to emerge victorious. "We talk about being mentally tough, being your best regardless of the circumstance," McVay said. "I thought the players did that. They found a way in spite of some of the ups and the downs to come away with the win." One of those "ups" happened at the game's start as it took Los Angeles just 12 seconds to score. Nickell Robey-Coleman intercepted a pass on the 49ers' first offensive play and returned it to the 3-yard line, where Gurley ran for a touchdown on the next play. The Rams, who were the lowest-scoring team in the NFL in 2016, led the league with 107 points after three weeks of play.

▸ **Third Week Thrills:** Marcedes Lewis caught three TD passes – the most by a player in a London Series game in its 11-year history – to help power Jacksonville to a 44-7 victory over the Ravens at Wembley Stadium … A.J. Green caught his 500th career pass and 50th touchdown in the Bengals' overtime loss to Green Bay, becoming just the third player in league history to reach those marks in his first 90 games … Kirk Cousins threw for 365 yards and three touchdowns, and the Redskins' defense allowed just 128 total yards and seven first downs in Washington's 27-10 triumph over the Raiders … Demarcus Lawrence had three of Dallas' six sacks and Dak Prescott fired a tie-breaking 37-yard touchdown pass to Brice Butler early in the fourth quarter as the Cowboys went on to defeat the Cardinals, 28-17.

WEEK 4

The Bills continued to be one of the league's surprise teams, topping the Falcons, 23-17, to improve to 3-1 and seize the early lead in the AFC East. Kicker Stephen Hauschka broke a 17-17 tie with a 56-yard field goal with just under five minutes remaining and added a 55-yarder on

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$4.1 million+: Scholarship dollars given to veterans and service members since 2014.

33: The number of times we have testified before Congress on veterans' issues in the last year.

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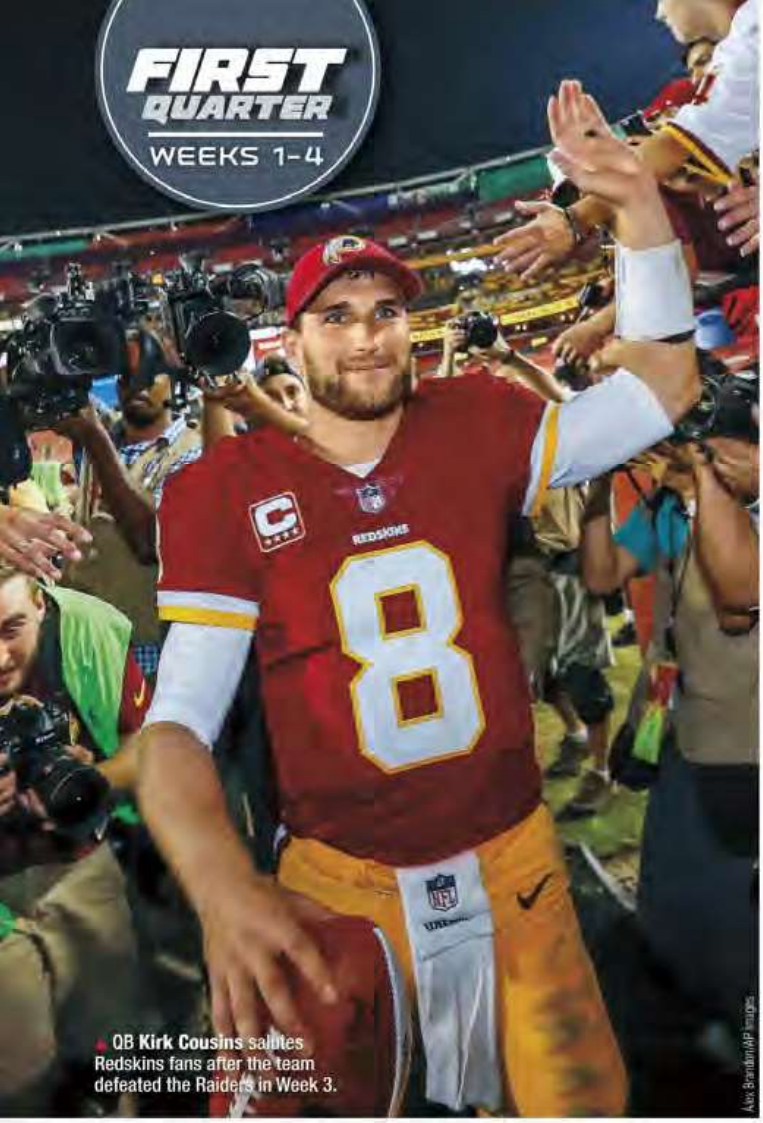
FIRST QUARTER
WEEKS 1-4



QB **Kirk Cousins** salutes Redskins fans after the team defeated the Raiders in Week 3.

Alex Brandon/AP Images

"HE'S THE BEST I'VE EVER SEEN, AND I'VE SEEN SOME REALLY GOOD ONES."

– CARDINALS QB CARSON PALMER, DESCRIBING WIDE RECEIVER LARRY FITZGERALD

Buffalo's next possession. "It's a fun position to be in when you want to kick like that at the end of the game," said Hauschka, who joined the Bills after six seasons in Seattle. Micah Hyde grabbed a pair of interceptions and helped Buffalo's defense hold on in the final minute, when the Falcons drove to the 10-yard line before being stopped on downs. The defense provided points, too, scoring on Tre'Davious White's 52-yard fumble return-touchdown in the third quarter. "It feels good," said Bills coach Sean McDermott, "(but) there's a long way to go."

▸ **Stepping Fourth:** Deshaun Watson threw for 283 yards and four TDs and rushed for another score in the Texans' 57-14 win over Tennessee … Cam Newton totaled 316 passing yards with three TDs and added a rushing touchdown, the 50th of his career, in the Panthers' 33-30 triumph at New England … LeGarrette Blount accounted for 136 of the Eagles' 214 rushing yards, including a 68-yard burst that set up Philadelphia's final touchdown, in a 26-24 victory over the Chargers … New Orleans allowed just 186 total yards en route to its first shutout since the 2012 season in defeating Miami, 20-0, in London.

SCORES & AWARDS

WEEK 1 / SEPT. 7-11

Kansas City 42, NEW ENGLAND 27
Pittsburgh 21, CLEVELAND 18
DETROIT 35, Arizona 23
Jacksonville 29, HOUSTON 7
Oakland 26, TENNESSEE 16
Philadelphia 30, WASHINGTON 17
Baltimore 20, CINCINNATI 0
Atlanta 23, CHICAGO 17
BUFFALO 21, NY Jets 12
LA RAMS 46, Indianapolis 9
GREEN BAY 17, Seattle 9
Carolina 23, SAN FRANCISCO 3
DALLAS 19, NY Giants 3
MINNESOTA 29, New Orleans 19
DENVER 24, LA Chargers 21
Byes: Miami, Tampa Bay

PLAYERS OF THE WEEK
AFC Offense
QB Alex Smith, Kansas City
AFC Defense
DE Calais Campbell, Jacksonville
AFC Special Teams
K Giorgio Tavecchio, Oakland
NFC Offense
QB Sam Bradford, Minnesota
NFC Defense
CB Trumaine Johnson, LA Rams
NFC Special Teams
K Matt Prater, Detroit
Pepsi NFL Rookie
RB Kareem Hunt, Kansas City

WEEK 2 / SEPT. 14-18

Houston 13, CINCINNATI 9
BALTIMORE 24, Cleveland 10
TAMPA BAY 29, Chicago 7
PITTSBURGH 26, Minnesota 9
New England 36, NEW ORLEANS 20
KANSAS CITY 27, Philadelphia 20
Tennessee 37, JACKSONVILLE 16
Arizona 16, INDIANAPOLIS 13 (OT)
CAROLINA 9, Buffalo 3
OAKLAND 45, NY Jets 20
Miami 19, LA CHARGERS 17
SEATTLE 12, San Francisco 9
Washington 27, LA RAMS 20
DENVER 42, Dallas 17
ATLANTA 34, Green Bay 23
Detroit 24, NY GIANTS 10

PLAYERS OF THE WEEK
AFC Offense
QB Tom Brady, New England
AFC Defense
DE Chris Jones, Kansas City
AFC Special Teams
K Cody Parkey, Miami
NFC Offense
WR J.J. Nelson, Arizona
NFC Defense
CB Desmond Trufant, Atlanta
NFC Special Teams
PR Jamal Agnew, Detroit
Pepsi NFL Rookie
LB Tyus Bowser, Baltimore

WEEK 3 / SEPT. 21-25

LA Rams 41, SAN FRANCISCO 39
JACKSONVILLE 44, Baltimore 7 (London)
INDIANAPOLIS 31, Cleveland 28
PHILADELPHIA 27, NY Giants 24
NY JETS 20, Miami 6
BUFFALO 26, Denver 16
New Orleans 34, CAROLINA 13
CHICAGO 23, Pittsburgh 17 (OT)
Atlanta 30, DETROIT 26
MINNESOTA 34, Tampa Bay 17
NEW ENGLAND 36, Houston 33
TENNESSEE 33, Seattle 27
GREEN BAY 27, Cincinnati 24 (OT)
Kansas City 24, LA CHARGERS 10
WASHINGTON 27, Oakland 10
DALLAS 28, Arizona 17

PLAYERS OF THE WEEK
AFC Offense
QB Tom Brady, New England
AFC Defense
S Terrence Brooks, NY Jets
AFC Special Teams
K Stephen Hauschka, Buffalo
NFC Offense
QB Kirk Cousins, Washington
NFC Defense
DE Demarcus Lawrence, Dallas
NFC Special Teams
K Jake Elliott, Philadelphia
Pepsi NFL Rookie
K Jake Elliott, Philadelphia

WEEK 4 / SEPT. 28-OCT. 2

GREEN BAY 35, Chicago 14
New Orleans 20, MIAMI 0 (London)
HOUSTON 57, Tennessee 14
NY JETS 23, Jacksonville 20 (OT)
Carolina 33, NEW ENGLAND 30
Detroit 14, MINNESOTA 7
Buffalo 23, ATLANTA 17
Pittsburgh 26, BALTIMORE 9
Cincinnati 31, CLEVELAND 7
LA Rams 35, DALLAS 30
Philadelphia 26, LA CHARGERS 24
TAMPA BAY 25, NY Giants 23
ARIZONA 18, San Francisco 15 (OT)
DENVER 16, Oakland 10
SEATTLE 46, Indianapolis 18
KANSAS CITY 29, Washington 20

PLAYERS OF THE WEEK
AFC Offense
QB Deshaun Watson, Houston
AFC Defense
DE Cameron Heyward, Pittsburgh
AFC Special Teams
K Stephen Hauschka, Buffalo
NFC Offense
RB Todd Gurley, LA Rams
NFC Defense
DE Julius Peppers, Carolina
NFC Special Teams
K Greg Zuerlein, LA Rams
Pepsi NFL Rookie
RB Alvin Kamara, New Orleans

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SECOND QUARTER

WEEKS 5-8

EAGLES SOARING AT MIDSEASON

Six-game winning streak catapults Philadelphia to league's best record

As the 2017 season hit the halfway mark, the hottest team in football was the Philadelphia Eagles, who found themselves perched atop the NFL with a 7-1 mark.

The Eagles were riding a six-game winning streak – their longest since 2009 – that included a 34-24 victory over NFC East rival Washington in Week 7. QB Carson Wentz threw for four touchdowns in the win, giving him 19 through eight games, tied for the league lead.

In Week 5, he came out firing, unloading three touchdown passes before the first quarter was complete, including a 59-yarder to Torrey Smith, to spark a 34-7 win over Arizona. Wentz also guided Philadelphia to a 28-23 victory at Carolina and a 33-10 home triumph over the 49ers.

With Carson Wentz running the show on offense, the Eagles owned a league-best 7-1 record and had scored 232 points, the most in the NFC through eight weeks.

Eagles coach Doug Pederson was watching his second-year quarterback with awe. "It's a special thing. And to see it in real time from the sidelines with some of the plays that he makes, he's elevating the game and the guys around him, too. He's full of plays."

Defense and special teams were part of the Philadelphia story as well. Against San Francisco, the Eagles recorded four sacks and cornerback Jalen Mills grabbed an interception that he brought back 37 yards for a touchdown. In that same game, Derek Barnett blocked a field goal attempt and Jake Elliott kicked a 51-yard field goal, his franchise single-season record fifth of 50-plus yards.

"The mark of this team is that we pick each other up," said tight end Zach Ertz, who had six TDs among his 43 receptions.

Several other teams around the league were flexing some midseason muscle. The Saints, after dropping their first two games of the year, had won five straight to take charge in the NFC South, while the Vikings, Seahawks, and Patriots all owned four-game winning streaks.

Aaron M. Sprecher/AP Images

NFL STANDINGS - THROUGH WEEK 8

AFC EAST	W-L-T	PCT	PF	PA
New England	6-2-0	.750	216	179
Buffalo	5-2-0	.714	153	115
Miami	4-3-0	.571	92	152
N.Y. Jets	3-5-0	.375	157	186

AFC NORTH	W-L-T	PCT	PF	PA
Pittsburgh	6-2-0	.750	167	131
Baltimore	4-4-0	.500	170	148
Cincinnati	3-4-0	.429	122	135
Cleveland	0-8-0	.000	119	202

AFC SOUTH	W-L-T	PCT	PF	PA
Tennessee	4-3-0	.571	158	173
Jacksonville	4-3-0	.571	183	110
Houston	3-4-0	.429	215	188
Indianapolis	2-6-0	.250	142	246

AFC WEST	W-L-T	PCT	PF	PA
Kansas City	6-2-0	.750	236	180
Denver	3-4-0	.429	127	147
L.A. Chargers	3-5-0	.375	150	152
Oakland	3-5-0	.375	169	190

NFC EAST	W-L-T	PCT	PF	PA
Philadelphia	7-1-0	.875	232	156
Dallas	4-3-0	.571	198	161
Washington	3-4-0	.429	160	180
N.Y. Giants	1-6-0	.143	112	156

NFC NORTH	W-L-T	PCT	PF	PA
Minnesota	6-2-0	.750	179	135
Green Bay	4-3-0	.571	164	161
Detroit	3-4-0	.429	176	169
Chicago	3-5-0	.375	134	171

NFC SOUTH	W-L-T	PCT	PF	PA
New Orleans	5-2-0	.714	191	145
Carolina	5-3-0	.625	148	142
Atlanta	4-3-0	.571	153	152
Tampa Bay	2-5-0	.286	148	168

NFC WEST	W-L-T	PCT	PF	PA
Seattle	5-2-0	.714	175	132
L.A. Rams	5-2-0	.714	212	138
Arizona	3-4-0	.429	119	191
San Francisco	0-8-0	.000	133	219

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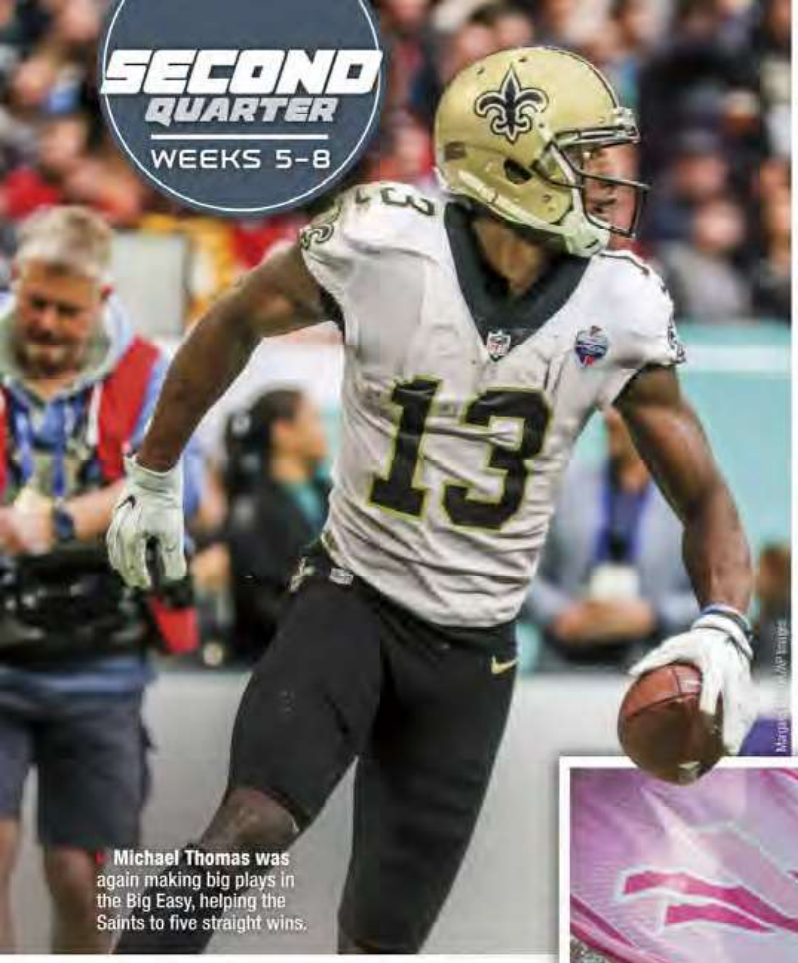
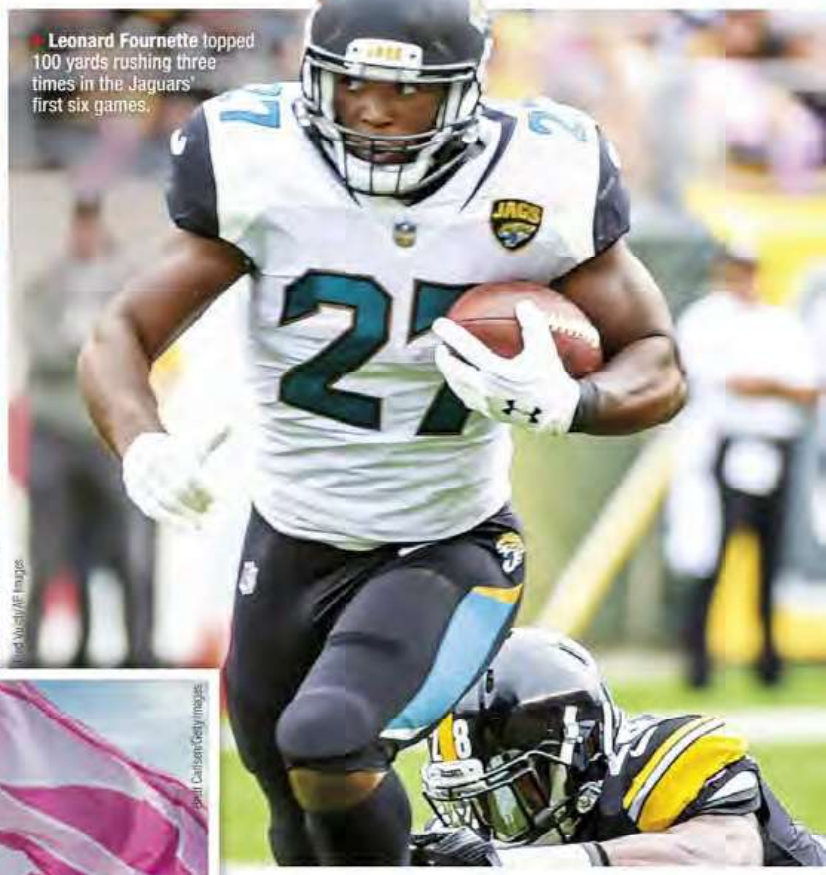
SECOND QUARTER
WEEKS 5-8



Michael Thomas was again making big plays in the Big Easy, helping the Saints to five straight wins.



Leonard Fournette topped 100 yards rushing three times in the Jaguars' first six games.

Throughout October, the NFL's "Crucial Catch: Intercept Cancer" campaign held awareness events at each stadium, including Buffalo's New Era Field.

WEEK 5

With a 30-9 victory over the Steelers, the Jaguars improved to 3-2 and matched their win total from the entire 2016 campaign. Rookie Leonard Fournette rushed for 181 yards and capped Jacksonville's scoring with a 90-yard burst, while the defense hauled in five interceptions, including two by safety Tashaun Gipson. "This a completely different ball club compared to last year," Gipson said. "We have guys who will make plays on the football, guys in situations to make plays, and that's all you can ask for." The Jaguars trailed, 9-7, in the third quarter before defensive lineman Abry Jones tipped a pass into the arms of teammate Telvin Smith, who sprinted 28 yards for an interception-return touchdown that put their team in the lead. On the Steelers' next possession, Barry Church picked off another tipped pass and raced 51 yards for a score. With 15 takeaways in their first five games, the Jaguars had already topped their NFL-low total of 13 in 2016.

▸ **High Fives:** Aaron Rodgers directed a 75-yard touchdown drive, capped by a 12-yard pass to Davante Adams with 11 seconds remaining, to lift the Packers over the Cowboys, 35-31 … Adam Vinatieri's 51-yard field goal gave the Colts a 26-23 overtime victory over the 49ers. It was his 10th career overtime game-winning field goal, the most in NFL history … Kansas City improved to 5-0 as Alex Smith threw for 324 yards and three TDs in a 42-34 win at Houston … Ed Dickson piled up 175 receiving yards on just five catches in the Panthers' 27-24 win at Detroit … Ten of the week's 14 games were decided by six points or fewer, the highest percentage of games that close in a single week in the past 25 seasons.

NEXT GEN GEM

The longest completed pass in Week 5 belonged to the Colts' **Jacoby Brissett.** His throw to T.Y. Hilton traveled 62.4 yards in the air and went for a touchdown in Indianapolis' 26-23 overtime win against the 49ers.

WEEK 6

One of the wildest weekends in recent NFL memory produced 15 defensive/special teams touchdowns – coming on eight interceptions, two kickoffs, two punts, two fumbles, and one blocked punt. Five of those TDs occurred in the Saints' 52-38 win over the Lions, the final one an interception by New Orleans defensive lineman Cam Jordan that he tipped to himself and brought in for a score to halt a late Detroit rally. "Fourth quarter, game was sort of tight. We had to seal that," Jordan said. "I had been preaching: 'This is our chance to respond.' I'm glad I was the one to do it." The Saints had built what seemed a commanding 45-10 lead, which included TDs on Kenny Vaccaro's end zone fumble recovery and Marshon Lattimore's 27-yard interception return. But Detroit rallied with four touchdowns in a span of less than 15 minutes, among them a 74-yard Jamal Agnew punt return and A'Shawn Robinson's two-yard interception return, to close the gap to 45-38, and had the ball again when Jordan made his big play. "Probably one of the crazier games I have been a part of," said Saints quarterback Drew Brees, who threw for 186 yards and two TDs.

▸ **Pick Sixes:** Tom Brady had 257 passing yards and two touchdowns in the Patriots' 24-17 win over the Jets. It was his 187th career regular-season victory, setting the mark for the most in NFL history … The Rams-Jaguars game became the first in the Super Bowl era with two TDs of at least 75 yards in the first 30 seconds. Los Angeles' Pharoh Cooper brought back the opening kickoff 103 yards for a score, and Jacksonville's Leonard Fournette answered with a 75-yard rushing TD on his team's

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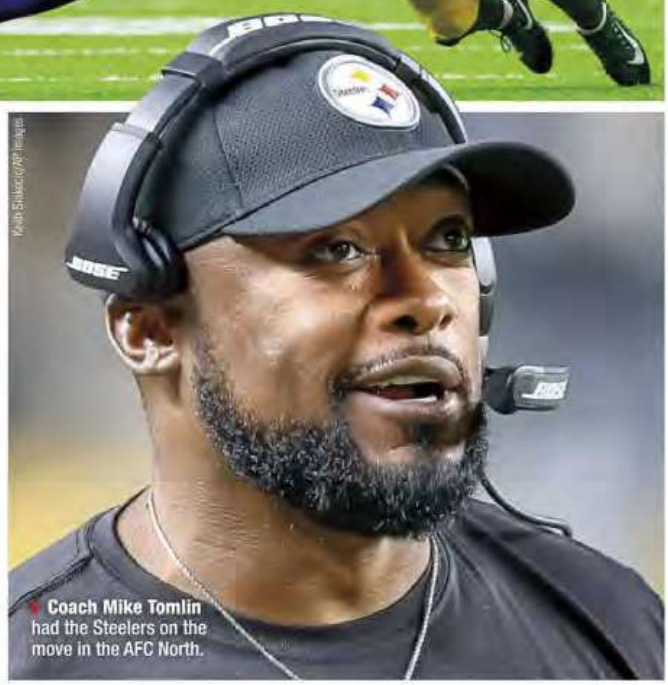
Jeff Haynes/AP Images

Kyle Rudolph and the 6-2 Vikings were a leg up on the competition in the NFC North.



Keith Srakocic/AP Images

Coach Mike Tomlin had the Steelers on the move in the AFC North.

Demarcus Lawrence and the Cowboys were starting to bring the pressure to opponents.

"THERE IS A LOT OF HEART IN THIS FOOTBALL TEAM. TO ME, THAT REALLY PERSONIFIES THIS CITY. HEART. TOUGHNESS. BLUE-COLLAR."

– BUFFALO BILLS COACH SEAN McDERMOTT

first play from scrimmage. The Rams eventually won, 27-17 … Le'Veon Bell rushed for 179 yards and Antonio Brown caught eight passes for 155 yards as the Steelers handed the Chiefs their first defeat, 19-13.

WEEK 7

Two AFC East teams turned late turnovers into scores to pull out big wins. With Buffalo tied against Tampa Bay, Tre'Davious White forced a fumble that he then recovered, setting up Stephen Hauschka's 30-yard field goal with 14 seconds remaining that lifted the Bills to a 30-27 victory. Buffalo had trailed by seven with less than three minutes to play before LeSean McCoy's seven-yard TD scamper tied the game. White then came up big on the Buccaneers' next play from scrimmage, giving his team possession at the Tampa Bay 33. "Some of these wins aren't the prettiest, but we're finding ways to win," White said. "I wouldn't want to play with another group of guys." In Miami, the Dolphins were behind the Jets, 28-14, in the fourth quarter before Matt Moore tossed a pair of touchdown passes to Kenny Stills to tie things up. A Bobby McCain interception in the final minute then positioned Cody Parkey to kick a 39-yard field goal that gave the Dolphins the 31-28 decision. "That was fun, man," Moore said. "And when you can contribute and have a comeback like that, it's fun for everybody."

▸ **Super In Seven:** A rematch of Super Bowl LI went the Patriots' way as Brandin Cooks and James White each caught touchdown passes in a 23-7 victory over the Falcons … Bears safety Eddie Jackson became the first player in NFL history with multiple defensive TDs of at least 75 yards in a single game, bringing back an interception 76 yards and a fumble recovery 75 yards in Chicago's 17-3 victory over Carolina … Drew Brees became the fourth NFL player to reach 500 career touchdown passes (including playoffs), doing so as part of a 27-of-38, 331-yard performance in the Saints' 26-17 win at Green Bay … Jacksonville had its second 10-sack game of the season, with Yannick Ngakoue (2.5 sacks) and Calais Campbell (two) leading the way in a 27-0 blanking of the Colts … Dak Prescott threw for 234 yards and three TDs in Dallas' 40-10 win over the 49ers … Browns tackle Joe Thomas saw his streak of consecutive offensive plays snapped at 10,363 – a mark that dated back to the 2007 season – when he suffered a triceps injury against Tennessee.

Bill Kostroun/AP Images

◂ **Seattle's offense** was starting to move the needle behind the playmaking skills of Russell Wilson.

WEEK 8

One of the year's most electric contests saw the Seahawks edge the Texans, 41-38, the winning points coming on Jimmy Graham's 18-yard TD grab with 21 seconds to play. It marked the last of four lead changes over the game's final 9:09 and capped an 80-yard march led by QB Russell Wilson, who threw for 452 yards and four TDs. "This to me might be [Wilson's] finest work today," praised Seahawks wide receiver Doug Baldwin, who caught six passes. Houston's Deshaun Watson was every bit as outstanding in defeat, becoming the first player in the Super Bowl era with 400 yards passing, four touchdown passes, and 50 yards rushing in a game.

▸ **Week Eight Greats:** C.J. Mosley and Jimmy Smith each returned interceptions for touchdowns, part of a dominant defensive effort that saw the Ravens allow just 196 total yards in a 40-0 shutout of Miami … LeSean McCoy rushed for 151 yards and a touchdown, and linebacker Matt Milano had the go-ahead score on a 40-yard fumble-return TD as the Bills battled past the Raiders, 34-14 … Panthers defensive end Julius Peppers recorded his 151st career sack, moving past Chris Doleman and into fourth place on the NFL's all-time list, during Carolina's 17-3 win at Tampa Bay … Carlos Dunlap brought back a fourth-quarter interception 16 yards for a touchdown, providing the decisive points in the Bengals' 24-23 victory over the Colts.

NEXT GEN GEM

In their 17-3 win over Carolina, the **Bears** enjoyed tremendous success on the blitz. They limited Panthers QB Cam Newton to a 5.3 passer rating when blitzing, the lowest mark in Week 7.

SCORES & AWARDS

WEEK 5 / OCT. 5-9

New England 19, TAMPA BAY 14
NY Jets 17, CLEVELAND 14
Carolina 27, DETROIT 24
INDIANAPOLIS 26, San Francisco 23 (OT)
MIAMI 16, Tennessee 10
CINCINNATI 20, Buffalo 16
LA Chargers 27, NY GIANTS 22
Jacksonville 30, PITTSBURGH 9
PHILADELPHIA 34, Arizona 7
Seattle 16, LA RAMS 10
Baltimore 30, OAKLAND 17
Green Bay 35, DALLAS 31
Kansas City 42, HOUSTON 34
Minnesota 20, CHICAGO 17
Byes: Atlanta, Denver, New Orleans, Washington

PLAYERS OF THE WEEK
AFC Offense
RB Melvin Gordon, LA Chargers
AFC Defense
LB Telvin Smith, Jacksonville
AFC Special Teams
K Adam Vinatieri, Indianapolis
NFC Offense
QB Aaron Rodgers, Green Bay
NFC Defense
S Earl Thomas, Seattle
NFC Special Teams
PR Kenjon Barner, Philadelphia
Pepsi NFL Rookie
RB Aaron Jones, Green Bay

WEEK 6 / OCT. 12-16

Philadelphia 28, CAROLINA 23
Chicago 27, BALTIMORE 24 (OT)
HOUSTON 33, Cleveland 17
MINNESOTA 23, Green Bay 10
NEW ORLEANS 52, Detroit 38
Miami 20, ATLANTA 17
New England 24, NY JETS 17
WASHINGTON 26, San Francisco 24
ARIZONA 38, Tampa Bay 33
LA Rams 27, JACKSONVILLE 17
Pittsburgh 19, KANSAS CITY 13
LA Chargers 17, OAKLAND 16
NY GIANTS 23, Denver 10
TENNESSEE 36, Indianapolis 22
Byes: Buffalo, Cincinnati, Dallas, Seattle

PLAYERS OF THE WEEK
AFC Offense
RB Le'Veon Bell, Pittsburgh
AFC Defense
CB Johnathan Joseph, Houston
AFC Special Teams
K Ryan Succop, Tennessee
NFC Offense
RB Adrian Peterson, Arizona
NFC Defense
DE Cameron Jordan, New Orleans
NFC Special Teams
KR Pharoh Cooper, LA Rams
Pepsi NFL Rookie
CB Marshon Lattimore, New Orleans

WEEK 7 / OCT. 19-23

OAKLAND 31, Kansas City 30
BUFFALO 30, Tampa Bay 27
MINNESOTA 24, Baltimore 16
MIAMI 31, NY Jets 28
LA RAMS 33, Arizona 0 (London)
Jacksonville 27, INDIANAPOLIS 0
New Orleans 26, GREEN BAY 17
CHICAGO 17, Carolina 3
Tennessee 12, CLEVELAND 9 (OT)
Dallas 40, SAN FRANCISCO 10
LA CHARGERS 21, Denver 0
PITTSBURGH 29, Cincinnati 14
Seattle 24, NY GIANTS 7
NEW ENGLAND 23, Atlanta 7
PHILADELPHIA 34, Washington 24
Byes: Detroit, Houston

PLAYERS OF THE WEEK
AFC Offense
WR Amari Cooper, Oakland
AFC Defense
S Kevin Byard, Tennessee
AFC Special Teams
PR Travis Benjamin, LA Chargers
NFC Offense
QB Carson Wentz, Philadelphia
NFC Defense
S Eddie Jackson, Chicago
NFC Special Teams
K Kai Forbath, Minnesota
Pepsi NFL Rookie
RB Aaron Jones, Green Bay

WEEK 8 / OCT. 26-30

BALTIMORE 40, Miami 0
Minnesota 33, CLEVELAND 16 (London)
Atlanta 25, NY JETS 20
Carolina 17, TAMPA BAY 3
PHILADELPHIA 33, San Francisco 10
NEW ORLEANS 20, Chicago 12
NEW ENGLAND 21, LA Chargers 13
BUFFALO 34, Oakland 14
CINCINNATI 24, Indianapolis 23
SEATTLE 41, Houston 38
Dallas 33, WASHINGTON 19
Pittsburgh 20, DETROIT 15
KANSAS CITY 29, Denver 19
Byes: Arizona, Green Bay, Jacksonville, LA Rams, NY Giants, Tennessee

PLAYERS OF THE WEEK
AFC Offense
WR JuJu Smith-Schuster, Pittsburgh
AFC Defense
DE Carlos Dunlap, Cincinnati
AFC Special Teams
K Harrison Butker, Kansas City
NFC Offense
QB Russell Wilson, Seattle
NFC Defense
CB Jalen Mills, Philadelphia
NFC Special Teams
DL Tyrone Crawford, Dallas
Pepsi NFL Rookie
CB Marshon Lattimore, New Orleans

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THIRD QUARTER

WEEKS 9–12

RAMS ROLLING IN NFC WEST

Quick-strike offense, rugged defense key team's 2017 turnaround

Energized by the play of second-year quarterback Jared Goff, the Los Angeles Rams launched into the season's stretch run with a division title – and more – in mind.

Their 26-20 win over New Orleans in Week 12 was significant in several ways. It both snapped the Saints' eight-game winning streak and kept Los Angeles one game ahead of Seattle in the NFC West, and, at 8-3, the Rams closed in on their first winning season since 2003.

Goff (28 of 43, 354 yards, 2 TDs) immediately went to work against the Saints, driving his team 59 yards on the game's opening possession, capped by a five-yard touchdown pass to Sammy Watkins that gave the Rams a lead they never relinquished.

Through 12 weeks, no running back had been as dynamic as the Rams' **Todd Gurley**, whose 11 touchdowns were an NFL-best. Two of those TDs came in a win over the Giants.

"Every win provides an opportunity to gain some confidence, but we've got a confident group," Rams coach Sean McVay said afterwards. "The biggest thing is we got to 8-3. That was a tough, hard-earned win for us."

Goff's arsenal included Watkins, top pass-catcher Robert Woods (47 receptions), and rookie receiver Cooper Kupp, but no weapon was as dangerous as Todd Gurley, whose 865 rushing yards through 12 weeks led the NFC and complemented his 42 receptions. He also had a league-high 11 TDs; eight on the ground and three through the air.

As part of their hot streak, the Rams scored on eight of their first nine possessions in a 51-17 decision over the Giants. They also posted a 33-7 win over Houston, a game that included a 94-yard Goff-to-Woods scoring toss, the team's longest offensive play since 1964.

The team's defense – led by defensive tackle Aaron Donald – was making things equally difficult for opponents. Donald had six sacks and two forced fumbles through 11 games, contributing to Los Angeles' +123 point differential, second-best in the NFL.

NFL STANDINGS - THROUGH WEEK 12

AFC EAST	W-L-T	PCT	PF	PA
New England	9-2-0	.818	325	220
Buffalo	6-5-0	.545	224	260
N.Y. Jets	4-7-0	.364	228	257
Miami	4-7-0	.364	174	289

AFC NORTH	W-L-T	PCT	PF	PA
Pittsburgh	9-2-0	.818	258	193
Baltimore	6-5-0	.545	236	187
Cincinnati	5-6-0	.455	199	215
Cleveland	0-11-0	.000	166	289

AFC SOUTH	W-L-T	PCT	PF	PA
Tennessee	7-4-0	.636	242	269
Jacksonville	7-4-0	.636	269	168
Houston	4-7-0	.364	283	285
Indianapolis	3-8-0	.273	195	300

AFC WEST	W-L-T	PCT	PF	PA
Kansas City	6-5-0	.545	272	236
L.A. Chargers	5-6-0	.455	249	202
Oakland	5-6-0	.455	225	261
Denver	3-8-0	.273	197	280

NFC EAST	W-L-T	PCT	PF	PA
Philadelphia	10-1-0	.909	351	191
Dallas	5-6-0	.455	248	270
Washington	5-6-0	.455	258	276
N.Y. Giants	2-9-0	.182	172	267

NFC NORTH	W-L-T	PCT	PF	PA
Minnesota	9-2-0	.818	271	195
Detroit	6-5-0	.545	294	264
Green Bay	5-6-0	.455	232	261
Chicago	3-8-0	.273	177	252

NFC SOUTH	W-L-T	PCT	PF	PA
New Orleans	8-3-0	.727	322	222
Carolina	8-3-0	.727	248	207
Atlanta	7-4-0	.636	265	230
Tampa Bay	4-7-0	.364	223	262

NFC WEST	W-L-T	PCT	PF	PA
L.A. Rams	8-3-0	.727	329	206
Seattle	7-4-0	.636	266	212
Arizona	5-6-0	.455	203	278
San Francisco	1-10-0	.091	187	284

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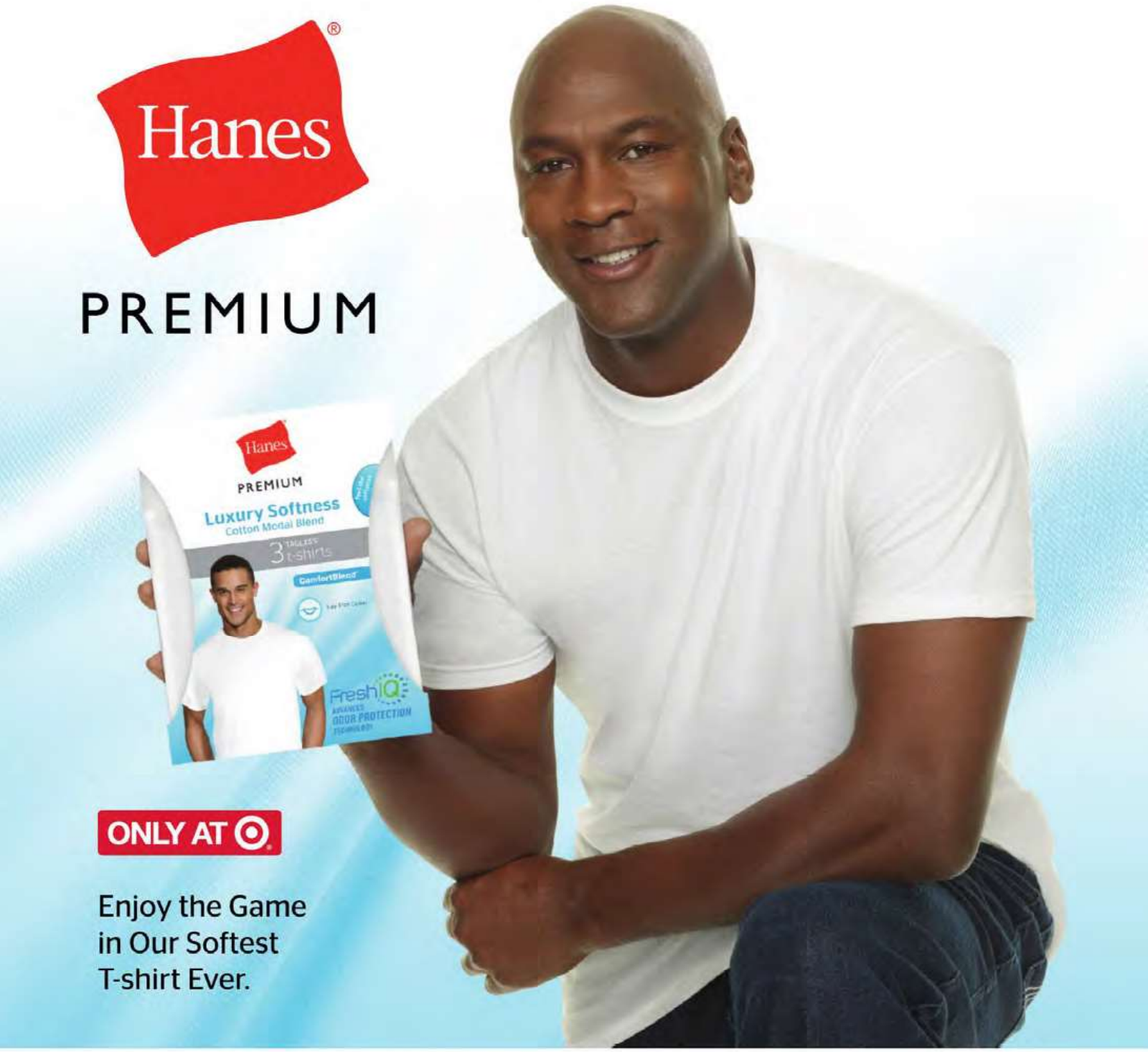

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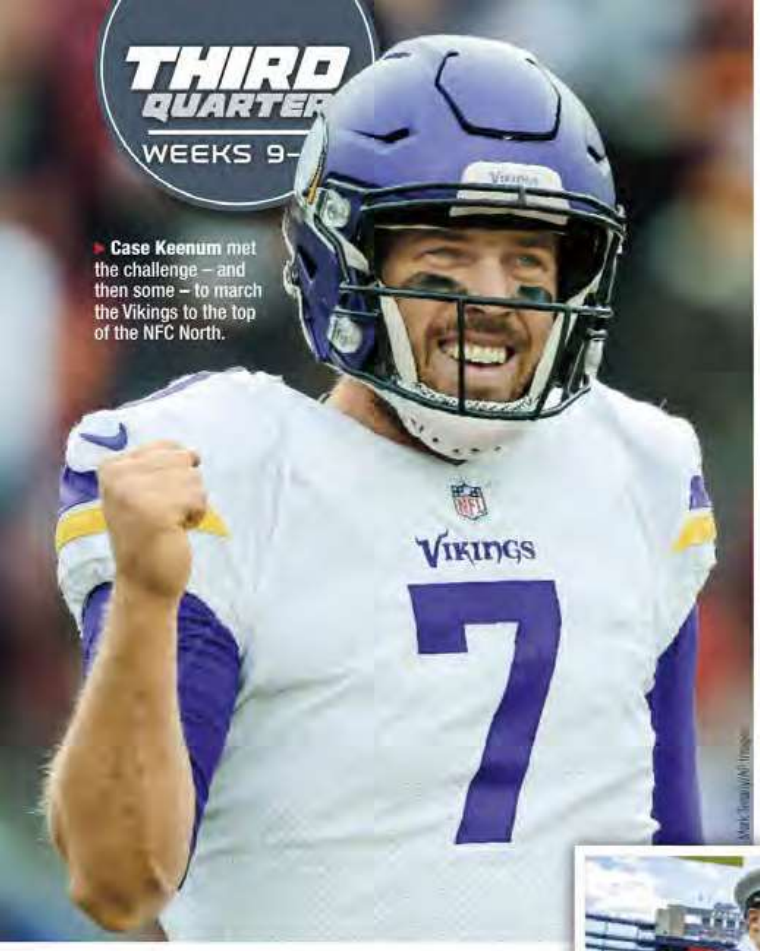
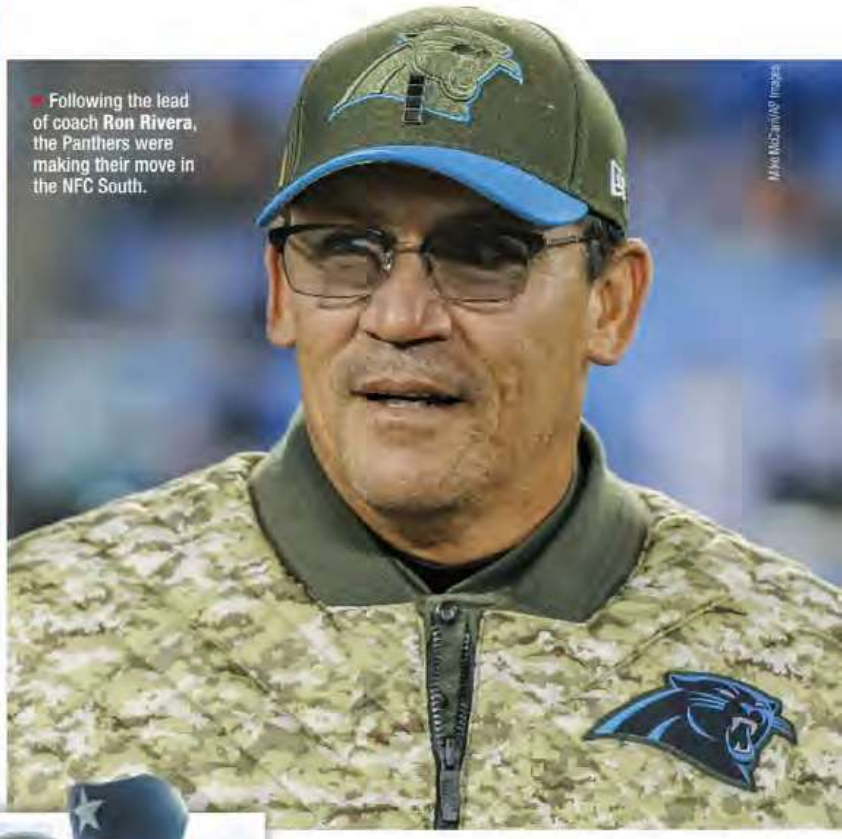
THIRD QUARTER

WEEKS 9–



Case Keenum met the challenge – and then some – to march the Vikings to the top of the NFC North.



Following the lead of coach **Ron Rivera**, the Panthers were making their move in the NFC South.

The NFL celebrated its annual **Salute to Service** military appreciation campaign with in-stadium ceremonies throughout the month of November.

"It's exciting," cornerback Trumaine Johnson said of the team's play. "A lot of guys in this locker room haven't been in this situation. It's big and every game is going to be more important, so we are doing everything one game at a time, one day at a time."

"I ALWAYS HEAR, 'THAT WAS AN UGLY WIN,' BUT I'VE NEVER HEARD SUCH A THING AS A PRETTY LOSS."

– PANTHERS QB CAM NEWTON, AFTER HIS TEAM'S 35-27 VICTORY OVER THE JETS

WEEK 9

The NFC East-leading Eagles remained on a roll, handling the Broncos, 51-23, for their seventh consecutive win. Carson Wentz threw four touchdown passes – giving him 17 over his last five games – and directed an offense that racked up 419 yards against the league's top-ranked defense. "Touchdowns are great, but being 8-1 is what it's all about," said Wentz, who threw two of his scoring strikes to Alshon Jeffrey, starting with a 32-yarder that gave his team a 7-3 lead. The defense continued to make its mark, too, with a Patrick Robinson interception setting up Corey Clement's TD catch that made it 14-3. Clement later added two rushing scores. The game also marked the Philly debut of Jay Ajayi, who reached the end zone on a 46-yard scamper that helped the Eagles post their highest point total since a 54-11 victory over the Bears in 2013.

To the Nines: Alvin Kamara caught a 33-yard TD pass and ran for 68 yards and another score as the Saints won their sixth straight game, defeating Tampa Bay, 30-10 … T.Y. Hilton caught five passes for 175 yards – two of those going for touchdowns – in leading the Colts past the Texans, 20-14 … Kevin Byard grabbed two interceptions, giving him five over a two-game stretch, in the Titans' 23-20 victory over the Ravens … Rob Kelley's one-yard touchdown run capped a last-minute drive that lifted Washington over the Seahawks, 17-14 … The Jets topped the Bills, 34-21, behind a ground game that totaled 194 yards and included a pair of Matt Forté touchdown runs … The Jaguars allowed just 148 total yards and Jaydon Mickens returned a punt 63 yards for a score in a 23-7 win over Cincinnati.

NEXT GEN GEM

Even when facing loaded boxes against Buffalo in Week 10, **Alvin Kamara** and **Mark Ingram** flourished. Kamara had seven five-plus-yard runs against loaded boxes while Ingram had four in New Orleans' 47-10 win.

WEEK 10

The NFC South race began to take shape with three teams vying for division bragging rights. Carolina won for the third straight week, 45-21 over Miami, thanks to an offensive outburst that generated a franchise-record 548 yards. Cam Newton threw for 254 yards and four touchdowns and ran for another 95 yards in the victory. "I still feel like we're scratching the surface of our potential in this offense. We have to trust in our ability to execute our coach's plan," he said. Atlanta upended the Cowboys, 27-7, behind Adrian Clayborn's six sacks and two forced fumbles and a pair of TD throws by Matt Ryan. "You always envision [a game like that]," said

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THIRD QUARTER
WEEKS 9-12

Rob Gronkowski (87) lunges for a touchdown during the Patriots' Week 12 win over Miami.

Terrell Suggs (55) and the Ravens were roughing up offenses with three shutouts in their first 11 games.

Kevin Byard was standing tall in the Titans secondary, grabbing two interceptions in the team's Week 9 victory over Baltimore.

Clayborn, whose sack total tied for the second-most in a game since the NFL began tracking the stat in 1982. "I was finally in my groove." Ryan, meanwhile, topped 40,000 career passing yards, doing so in the fewest games (151) in NFL history. Both those teams, however, remained chasing the Saints, who improved to 7-2 with a 47-10 win at Buffalo. New Orleans rushed for 298 yards and six touchdowns, 131 of those yards and three of those TDs coming from Mark Ingram.

▸ **Perfect 10s:** Jacksonville's Corey Grant ran a fake punt 56 yards for a touchdown and A.J. Bouye intercepted a pass in overtime to set up the game-winning field goal as the Jaguars edged the Chargers, 20-17 … Minnesota wide receiver Adam Thielen caught eight passes for 166 yards and a touchdown to pace the Vikings' 38-30 victory at Washington … Russell Wilson connected with Jimmy Graham on a pair of touchdown passes to spark Seattle's 22-16 win over the Cardinals … The Steelers-Colts game marked the first time in NFL history a player under the age of 21 (Pittsburgh's JuJu Smith-Schuster, age 20) and one over the age of 40 (Indianapolis' Adam Vinatieri, age 44) scored in the same game. Schuster had five catches, including a touchdown grab, while Vinatieri kicked a field goal and two PATs in the Steelers' 20-17 triumph.

NEXT GEN GEM

In Arizona's Week 11 game against Houston, **Blaine Gabbert** took both first and second place for max speed by a quarterback as a ball carrier, registering 19.35 and 19.06 mph.

WEEK 11

In a showdown between teams riding four-game winning streaks, Pittsburgh pulled away in the second half to take a 40-17 decision over Tennessee and improve to 8-2. QB Ben Roethlisberger accounted for 299 passing yards and four touchdowns, three of those going to Antonio Brown (10 receptions, 144 yards). "We've talked so much about having the potential in this room, but we can still strive for more," said defensive end Cameron Heyward, who recorded two sacks. "We're trying to be the best defense; that's what we strive for." Tennessee trailed by only two points, 16-14, after Marcus Mariota hit Rishard Matthews on a 75-yard TD pass to open the second half, but the Steelers countered with three straight touchdown drives – with Jesse James' one-yard TD catch sandwiched between two scoring throws to Brown. Chris Boswell kicked four field goals in the victory and the Steelers' defense contributed four interceptions, the pickoffs coming from Robert Golden, Mike Hilton, Sean Davis, and Coty Sensabaugh.

▸ **Add-ons From Eleven:** Latavius Murray's 2-yard TD run snapped a fourth-quarter tie and Case Keenum later threw a 65-yard scoring pass to Adam Thielen as the Vikings tripped up the Rams, 24-7 … The Saints became the first team in the Super Bowl era to win their next eight games after an 0-2 start, rallying from a 15-point deficit in the final three minutes of regulation and then beating Washington, 34-31, in overtime. Josh Hill and Alvin Kamara caught late touchdown passes, and Wil Lutz's 28-yard field goal won it … Tom Brady completed 30 of 37 passes for 340 yards and three touchdowns in leading the Patriots over the Raiders, 33-8, at Estadio Azteca in Mexico City … By blanking the Packers, 23-0, at Lambeau Field, the Ravens became the first NFL team in 14 years to post three shutouts in a single season … The Chargers picked off five first-half passes, one of those returned 59 yards for a touchdown by Korey Toomer, sparking a 54-24 victory over Buffalo.

WEEK 12

With their 35-17 victory over Miami, the Patriots clinched their 17th consecutive winning season, the NFL's longest streak since 1970 and eclipsing the previous mark of 16 shared by the Cowboys (1970-85) and the 49ers (1983-98). Rob Gronkowski caught two of Tom Brady's four TD passes as New England improved to 9-2 and moved a step closer to its ninth straight AFC East title. Dion Lewis rushed for 112 yards and Rex Burkhead scored twice for the victors, including a two-yard run for

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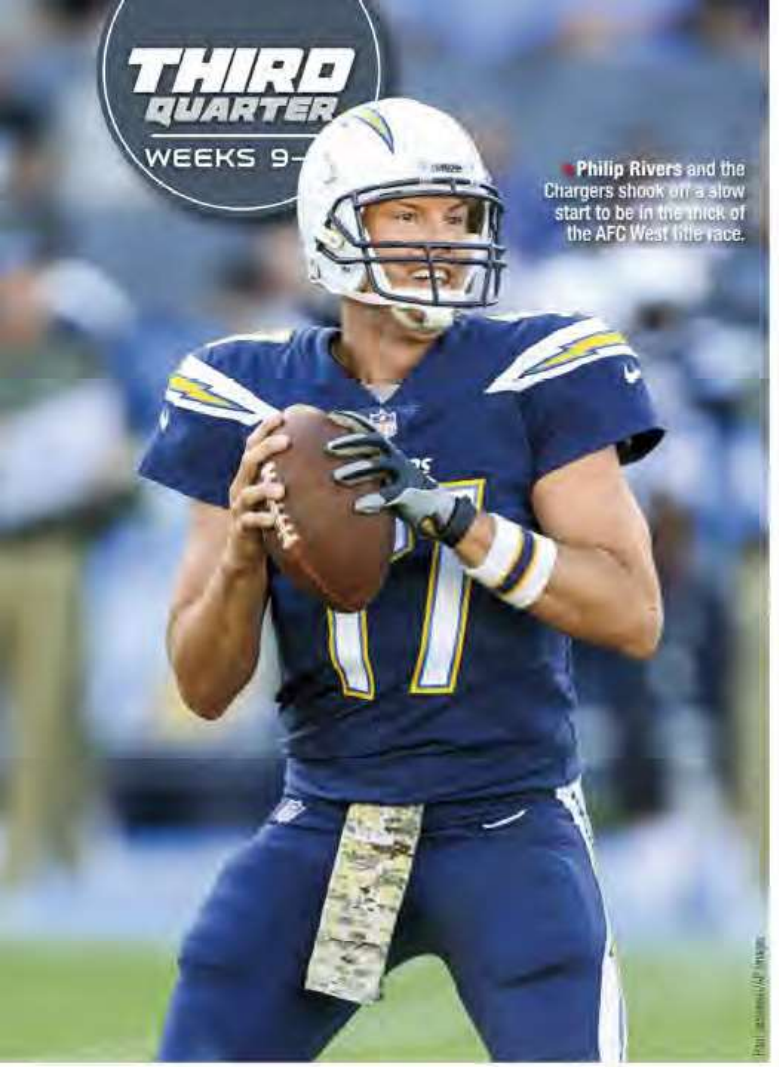

Philip Rivers and the Chargers shook off a slow start to be in the thick of the AFC West title race.

the team's first touchdown. "We know our biggest games are ahead of us," said Brady, whose 26 touchdown passes set a single-season record for a quarterback age 40 or older. "All the good teams are going to start playing really well. We've got to be one of those teams." The Dolphins threatened to make things interesting in the fourth quarter, pulling within 28-17 and having possession, but were stopped on downs at their own 38-yard line. New England then answered with a quick drive capped by Brady's five-yard scoring toss to Brandin Cooks.

▸ **Side Dishes:** The league's Thanksgiving Day slate was highlighted by Minnesota's 30-23 victory at Detroit, aided by Case Keenum's 282 passing yards and two TDs … Philip Rivers threw for 434 yards and three scores, his favorite target being Keenan Allen (11 receptions, 172 yards, 1 TD), in leading the Chargers to a 28-6 decision over Dallas … Wide receiver Julio Jones had 12 catches for 253 yards and two TDs in the Falcons' 34-20 win over Tampa Bay, marking his third career game with at least 250 receiving yards … Arizona snapped Jacksonville's four-game winning streak, 27-24, with Blaine Gabbert throwing for 241 yards and two touchdowns and Phil Dawson kicking a career-long 57-yard field goal with one second remaining to win it … Luke Kuechly had a 34-yard fumble-return touchdown and Kaelin Clay followed with a 60-yard punt-return TD, keying a fourth-quarter rally that led the Panthers to a 35-27 victory over the Jets.

NEXT GEN GEM

In the Eagles' 31-3 win over Chicago in Week 12, receiver **Nelson Agholor** traveled 1,231.9 yards in the 65 offensive snaps he played. He caught three passes in the game, one for a TD, and recovered a fumble in the end zone for another score.

SCORES & AWARDS

WEEK 9 / NOV. 2-6

NY JETS 34, Buffalo 21
Indianapolis 20, HOUSTON 14
JACKSONVILLE 23, Cincinnati 7
NEW ORLEANS 30, Tampa Bay 10
LA Rams 51, NY GIANTS 17
CAROLINA 20, Atlanta 17
PHILADELPHIA 51, Denver 23
TENNESSEE 23, Baltimore 20
Arizona 20, SAN FRANCISCO 10
Washington 17, SEATTLE 14
DALLAS 28, Kansas City 17
Oakland 27, MIAMI 24
Detroit 30, GREEN BAY 17

Byes: Chicago, Cleveland, Minnesota, New England, Pittsburgh, LA Chargers

PLAYERS OF THE WEEK
AFC Offense
WR T.Y. Hilton, Indianapolis
AFC Defense
LB Jordan Jenkins, NY Jets
AFC Special Teams
PR Jaydon Mickens, Jacksonville
NFC Offense
QB Jared Goff, LA Rams
NFC Defense
LB Karlos Dansby, Arizona
NFC Special Teams
DB Justin Hardee, New Orleans
Pepsi NFL Rookie
RB Alvin Kamara, New Orleans

WEEK 10 / NOV. 9-13

Seattle 22, ARIZONA 16
Green Bay 23, CHICAGO 16
DETROIT 38, Cleveland 24
Pittsburgh 20, INDIANAPOLIS 17
JACKSONVILLE 20, LA Chargers 17 (OT)
New Orleans 47, BUFFALO 10
TAMPA BAY 15, NY Jets 10
Minnesota 38, WASHINGTON 30
TENNESSEE 24, Cincinnati 20
LA RAMS 33, Houston 7
ATLANTA 27, Dallas 7
SAN FRANCISCO 31, NY Giants 21
New England 41, DENVER 16
CAROLINA 45, Miami 21

Byes: Baltimore, Kansas City, Oakland, Philadelphia

PLAYERS OF THE WEEK
AFC Offense
QB Tom Brady, New England
AFC Defense
CB A.J. Bouye, Jacksonville
AFC Special Teams
KR/RB Dion Lewis, New England
NFC Offense
QB Cam Newton, Carolina
NFC Defense
DE Adrian Clayborn, Atlanta
NFC Special Teams
K Greg Zuerlein, LA Rams
Pepsi NFL Rookie
RB Alvin Kamara, New Orleans

WEEK 11 / NOV. 16-20

PITTSBURGH 40, Tennessee 17
Detroit, 27, CHICAGO 24
Jacksonville 19, CLEVELAND 7
BALTIMORE 23, Green Bay 0
HOUSTON 31, Arizona 21
Tampa Bay 30, MIAMI 20
MINNESOTA 24, LA Rams 7
NY GIANTS 12, Kansas City 9 (OT)
NEW ORLEANS 34, Washington 31 (OT)
LA CHARGERS 54, Buffalo 24
Cincinnati 20, DENVER 17
New England 33, OAKLAND 8 (Mexico City)
Philadelphia 37, DALLAS 9
Atlanta 34, SEATTLE 31

Byes: Carolina, Indianapolis, NY Jets, San Francisco

PLAYERS OF THE WEEK
AFC Offense
WR Antonio Brown, Pittsburgh
AFC Defense
LB Matthew Judon, Baltimore
AFC Special Teams
K Stephen Gostkowski, New England
NFC Offense
RB Mark Ingram, New Orleans
NFC Defense
S Landon Collins, NY Giants
NFC Special Teams
KR/WR Tyler Lockett, Seattle
Pepsi NFL Rookie
RB Alvin Kamara, New Orleans

WEEK 12 / NOV. 23-27

Minnesota 30, DETROIT 23
LA Chargers 28, DALLAS 6
WASHINGTON 20, NY Giants 10
Tennessee 20, INDIANAPOLIS 16
PHILADELPHIA 31, Chicago 3
Carolina 35, NY JETS 27
NEW ENGLAND 35, Miami 17
ATLANTA 34, Tampa Bay 20
CINCINNATI 30, Cleveland 16
Buffalo 16, KANSAS CITY 10
Seattle 24, SAN FRANCISCO 13
LA RAMS 26, New Orleans 20
ARIZONA 27, Jacksonville 24
OAKLAND 21, Denver 14
PITTSBURGH 31, Green Bay 28
BALTIMORE 23, Houston 17

PLAYERS OF THE WEEK
AFC Offense
QB Philip Rivers, LA Chargers
AFC Defense
DE Cameron Heyward, Pittsburgh
AFC Special Teams
P Sam Koch, Baltimore
NFC Offense
WR Julio Jones, Atlanta
NFC Defense
LB Luke Kuechly, Carolina
NFC Special Teams
K Phil Dawson, Arizona
Pepsi NFL Rookie
RB Alvin Kamara, New Orleans

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FOURTH QUARTER
WEEKS 13–17

JAGUARS MAKE THE BIG JUMP

Stout defense, opportunistic offense help Jacksonville capture the AFC South

A sensational stretch of football that produced seven wins in eight games lifted the Jacksonville Jaguars to the AFC South title and their first playoff appearance in a decade. They also joined the NFC East champion Philadelphia Eagles as one of two teams in 2017 to go from "worst-to-first" in their division.

The Jaguars punched their ticket to the postseason in Week 15 with a 45-7 win over the Texans, an effort led by quarterback Blake Bortles, who threw for 326 yards and three touchdowns, and defensive end Calais Campbell, who had five tackles and two sacks.

"It's kind of cool that we solidified our spot," said Jaguars defensive tackle Malik Jackson after the game. "Now we can get over the giddiness of it. It's cool to be where we are, but we're not done yet."

Jacksonville's stretch run also included a 30-10 triumph over the Colts, a game that saw Jalen Ramsey and Tashaun Gipson snare interceptions, and a 30-24 decision over the Seahawks, paced by Leonard Fournette's 101 rushing yards and A.J Bouye's two pickoffs.

With their 10 wins, the Jaguars earned the AFC's No. 3 seed. And while their defense commanded much of the attention – the team's 16.8 ppg allowed and 55 sacks both ranked second in the league – the Jags led the NFL with 141.4 rushing yards per game, made possible by an underrated offensive line and Fournette's 1,040 rushing yards and nine touchdowns.

"Everything you do up until this point is just to get in the dance," said Campbell, whose 14.5 sacks set a franchise record and topped all AFC players. "It doesn't matter what seed you are. At this point, it's anyone's game. The best team will win."

Jaguars quarterback Blake Bortles played some of the best football of his career in 2017, throwing for 3,687 yards and 21 TDs and rushing for another 322 yards.

FINAL 2017 NFL STANDINGS

*Division Champion +Wild Card

AFC EAST	W-L-T	PCT	PF	PA
New England*	13-3-0	.813	458	296
Buffalo+	9-7-0	.563	302	359
Miami	6-10-0	.375	281	393
N.Y. Jets	5-11-0	.313	298	382

AFC NORTH	W-L-T	PCT	PF	PA
Pittsburgh*	13-3-0	.813	406	308
Baltimore	9-7-0	.563	395	303
Cincinnati	7-9-0	.438	290	349
Cleveland	0-16-0	.000	234	410

AFC SOUTH	W-L-T	PCT	PF	PA
Jacksonville*	10-6-0	.625	417	268
Tennessee+	9-7-0	.563	334	356
Houston	4-12-0	.250	338	436
Indianapolis	4-12-0	.250	263	404

AFC WEST	W-L-T	PCT	PF	PA
Kansas City*	10-6-0	.625	415	339
L.A. Chargers	9-7-0	.563	355	272
Oakland	6-10-0	.375	301	373
Denver	5-11-0	.313	289	392

NFC EAST	W-L-T	PCT	PF	PA
Philadelphia*	13-3-0	.813	457	295
Dallas	9-7-0	.563	354	332
Washington	7-9-0	.438	342	388
N.Y. Giants	3-13-0	.188	246	388

NFC NORTH	W-L-T	PCT	PF	PA
Minnesota*	13-3-0	.813	382	252
Detroit	9-7-0	.563	410	376
Green Bay	7-9-0	.438	320	384
Chicago	5-11-0	.313	264	320

NFC SOUTH	W-L-T	PCT	PF	PA
New Orleans*	11-5-0	.688	448	326
Carolina+	11-5-0	.688	363	327
Atlanta+	10-6-0	.625	353	315
Tampa Bay	5-11-0	.313	335	382

NFC WEST	W-L-T	PCT	PF	PA
L.A. Rams*	11-5-0	.688	478	329
Seattle	9-7-0	.563	366	332
Arizona	8-8-0	.500	295	361
San Francisco	6-10-0	.375	331	383

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Jeffrey T. Barnes/AP Images

LeSean McCoy (25) shakes off Colts LB Barkevious Mingo in a snowy Week 14 contest in Buffalo. McCoy's 21-yard TD run in overtime gave the Bills a 13-7 win.

Rachel Luna/Getty Images

The Raiders' Derek Carr was among the players who promoted charitable endeavors in Week 14 as part of the "My Cause My Cleats" campaign.

WEEK 13

With an impressive 14-9 road victory against Atlanta, the NFC North-leading Vikings extended their winning streak to eight games and took over as the conference's top seed. QB Case Keenum (25 of 30, 227 yards) fired a pair of touchdown passes, while Minnesota's defense limited the Falcons to just three field goals, the first time Atlanta had been kept out of the end zone in nearly two seasons. "It was a hard one," said Vikings coach Mike Zimmer, whose squad improved to 10-2. "We've got a good bunch of fighters on this football team; I think maybe they really believe now." Trailing 9-7 in the third quarter, Keenum directed Minnesota on a time-consuming 89-yard march that included three third-down conversions and ended with his six-yard scoring toss to Kyle Rudolph on the first play of the fourth quarter. Atlanta, meanwhile, was stifled on third downs, converting just 1-of-10, and never saw the ball again after missing a field goal with 4:58 to play. Eric Kendricks led the Vikings with 10 tackles, and Anthony Barr and Xavier Rhodes had five tackles each.

▸ **Early December Dandies:** Keenan Allen had 10 catches for 105 yards and a touchdown in the Chargers' 19-10 win over the Browns, becoming the first player in NFL history with at least 10 catches, 100 receiving yards, and a touchdown in three consecutive games … Aaron Jones rushed for the game-winning 20-yard TD with 5:59 remaining in overtime as the Packers defeated Tampa Bay, 26-20 … Seattle won a Sunday night showdown over the Eagles, 24-10, led by Russell Wilson, who completed 20 of 31 passes for 227 yards and three TDs (to Jimmy Graham, Tyler Lockett, and J.D. McKissic) … Marshawn Lynch's 101-yard rushing day included a 51-yard touchdown run that propelled the Raiders to a 24-17 victory over the Giants.

NEXT GEN GEM

Tarik Cohen of the Bears traveled 127.4 total yards while bringing back a punt for a 61-yard touchdown against the 49ers in Week 13. It ended up being the second-longest scoring play of the year, behind teammate Adrian Amos, who went 128.6 yards on a 90-yard interception-return TD in Week 6.

WEEK 14

The Chargers added another win as part of their late-season surge, improving to 7-6 with a 30-13 decision over Washington. Philip Rivers threw for 319 yards and a pair of touchdowns, including a 75-yarder to Tyrell Williams that came one play after the Redskins' first score. Hunter Henry caught the other TD pass for the Chargers, who moved above the .500 mark for the first time since early in the 2015 season and remained tied with the Chiefs atop in the AFC West. Rivers, in addition to guiding the victory, became just the third NFL quarterback to pass for at least 3,500 yards in 10 consecutive seasons. On the ground, Melvin Gordon rushed for 78 yards and scored on a one-yard run for the team's final TD, while cornerback Desmond King made a team-high 10 tackles and linebacker Kyle Emanuel added an interception. "I want players to always know what they're playing for, and right now, we're playing for our division," Chargers coach Anthony Lynn said.

▸ **Filling Out 14:** Ben Roethlisberger threw for 506 yards, becoming the first NFL quarterback to top 500 passing yards three times in his career, rallying the Steelers from an 11-point fourth-quarter deficit to beat Baltimore, 39-38 … Cam Newton's 62-yard run

▸ **Matthew Stafford led** all NFC quarterbacks in 2017 with 4,446 passing yards.

Gary Landers/AP Images

▸ **Alvin Kamara proved** to be a dual threat in the Saints backfield, scoring 13 TDs on the season.

▸ **Julio Jones (11)** and the Panthers' Mike Adams battle for the ball during the Falcons' Week 17 win that put them in the playoffs.

John Bazemore/AP Images

"OUR PLAYOFFS STARTED EARLY – IT WAS EITHER WIN OR GO HOME."

–FALCONS CORNERBACK ROBERT ALFORD, ON THE TEAM'S WEEK 17 GAME VS. CAROLINA

set up Jonathan Stewart's third touchdown of the game, a one-yard plunge that provided the winning points in Carolina's 31-24 victory over Minnesota … Jordan Howard rushed for 147 yards and two TDs to lead the Bears to a 33-7 win at Cincinnati … Carson Wentz threw four touchdown passes and Jake Elliott kicked a go-ahead 33-yard field goal with 3:45 to play to lead the Eagles past the Rams, 43-35, and clinch the NFC East title.

WEEK 15

By defeating Oakland, 20-17, the Cowboys won their third straight game and kept up their push for an NFC wild card berth. And they did it with a pair of gutsy calls. With the score tied, 10-10, in the third quarter, they executed a fake punt on a fourth-and-11 from their own 24 when punter Chris Jones ran 24 yards for a first down. Dallas ended up scoring seven plays later on quarterback Dak Prescott's 5-yard TD run. The game was then tied in the fourth quarter when Dallas went for it on a fourth-and-1 at its own 39-yard line. Prescott picked up the first down and three plays later fired a 40-yard pass to Dez Bryant, setting up Dan Bailey's go-ahead 19-yard field goal.

NEXT GEN GEM

While leading the Cowboys to a 30-10 victory over the Giants in Week 14, QB **Dak Prescott** completed 20 of 32 passes for 332 yards and three TDs, and, for the first time in his career, had a perfect passer rating (158.3) against the blitz.

The lead held up when Raiders quarterback Derek Carr, after driving his team deep into Dallas territory in the final minute, fumbled the ball out of the end zone for a touchback. "We continue to scratch, we continue to claw," said Cowboys coach Jason Garrett, whose team improved to 8-6. "It wasn't our most perfect performance, but the fight was there."

▸ **Wrapping up the Weekend:** Case Keenum completed 20 of 23 passes for 236 yards and two TDs, and Eric Kendricks returned an interception 31 yards for another score as the Vikings beat Cincinnati, 34-7, to clinch the NFC North title for the second time in three years … Dion Lewis scored the go-ahead touchdown with 56 seconds remaining and safety Duron Harmon then picked off a deflected pass in the end zone, securing the Patriots' 27-24 win over the Steelers and earning New England the AFC East title for the ninth straight season … Buffalo's LeSean McCoy scored a pair of TDs in a 24-16 victory over Miami and also reached 10,000 career rushing yards, achieving the feat in fewer carries than all but four players in NFL history … In an NFC West showdown, Todd Gurley rushed for 152 yards with three touchdowns and added a 14-yard TD reception to pace the Rams' 42-7 victory at Seattle.

WEEK 16

Jimmy Garoppolo continued to impress in San Francisco, throwing for 242 yards and two touchdowns, and scoring on a one-yard QB sneak, in leading the 49ers to their fourth straight win, 44-33, over the Jaguars.

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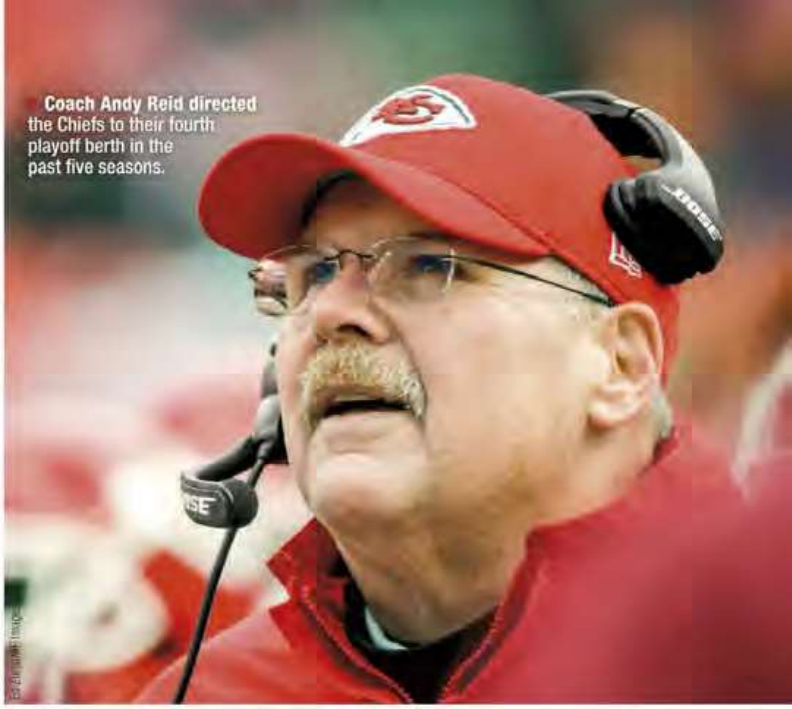
With Jimmy Garoppolo at quarterback, the 49ers' fortunes were looking up.



Coach Andy Reid directed the Chiefs to their fourth playoff berth in the past five seasons.

JuJu Smith-Schuster (19) kept the Steelers on their feet during the season's stretch run.

He wasted no time putting his team on the board, completing 5 of 6 passes for 75 yards on the 49ers' first drive before diving across the goal line for a TD. He later added scoring tosses to George Kittle and Trent Taylor. "It's awesome. Things are going good right now," said Garoppolo, acquired from New England in a midseason trade. "There's a buzz in the air. You can feel it as soon as you walk into the stadium. It's a nice thing to be a part of." Matt Breida and Carlos Hyde ran for touchdowns in the win, and the 49ers' defense made its mark as well, intercepting three passes, one of those by Dontae Johnson, who returned it 50 yards for a TD.

▸ **Stocking Stuffers:** The Patriots set an NFL record by winning at least 12 games for the eighth straight season, accomplishing the feat with their 37-16 victory over Buffalo … Joe Flacco threw for 237 yards and two TDs, and Maurice Canady knocked down a fourth-down pass to cap a late defensive stand as the Ravens edged the Colts, 23-16 … Drew Brees threw for 239 yards in the Saints' 23-13 win over Atlanta, and in the process became just the third player in league history to total 70,000 passing yards … Larry Fitzgerald went over 100 receptions for the fifth time in his career, catching nine passes for 119 yards and a TD in his team's 23-0 victory over the Giants … Cam Newton's two-yard scoring run with 35 seconds to play lifted the Panthers to a 22-19 win over Tampa Bay.

NEXT GEN GEM

The **Vikings** showed why they're the best team in the league when blitzing, holding Packers quarterback Brett Hundley to a 14.6 passer rating when rushing five or more players in their 16-0 victory in Week 16.

WEEK 17

A frantic final Sunday saw the last three playoff berths secured. In the NFC, the Falcons clinched a wild card by beating the Panthers, 22-10, behind Matt Bryant's five second-half field goals, one of those a 56-yarder. "We needed every point we could get," Bryant said. Matt Ryan (28 of 45 passing, 317 yards) threw a 19-yard TD pass to Devonta Freeman for Atlanta's other points, and the Falcons' defense stepped up as well, limiting Carolina to just 248 yards and intercepting three passes. It was a bit wilder in the AFC, where the Bills tripped up Miami, 22-16, to stay alive for their first postseason appearance since 1999, and then found out they were in minutes later when Cincinnati scored a late touchdown to upend the Ravens. "The locker room is electric," said guard Richie Incognito. "We have been working so hard for this. We're in the postseason, and we've got new life." Tennessee also locked up an AFC playoff berth, its first in eight years, thanks to a 15-10 victory over the Jaguars. QB Marcus Mariota connected with Derrick Henry on a screen pass that went for a 66-yard touchdown, and also rushed for 60 yards. "It is just an amazing feeling right now," said Titans safety Kevin Byard, whose second interception of the day sealed the outcome. "To be able to help this team win, and to be able to get a pick at the end. It means so much to me because I know it means so much to a lot of other guys."

▸ **Year-End Closeouts:** Kareem Hunt's lone run of the day – a 35-yard TD dart in the Chiefs' 24-21 victory at Denver – propelled him to the league rushing title with 1,327 yards for the season … The Saints' Alvin Kamara (1,554) and Mark Ingram (1,540) became the first running back teammates in NFL history to each record at least 1,500 scrimmage yards in the same season … The Vikings' defense held its second straight opponent without an offensive touchdown, helping Minnesota secure the No. 2 seed in the NFC with a 23-10 win over Chicago … San Francisco ended the year with its fifth straight win, beating the Rams, 34-13, behind Jimmy Garoppolo's 292 passing yards and two TDs … JuJu Smith-Schuster caught nine passes for 143 yards and also brought back a kickoff 96 yards for a touchdown in the Steelers' 28-24 victory over Cleveland.

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WEEK 13 / NOV. 30-DEC. 4

DALLAS 38, Washington 14
Minnesota 14, ATLANTA 9
TENNESSEE 24, Houston 13
NY JETS 38, Kansas City 31
MIAMI 35, Denver 9
JACKSONVILLE 30, Indianapolis 10
GREEN BAY 26, Tampa Bay 20 (OT)
BALTIMORE 44, Detroit 20
New England 23, BUFFALO 3
San Francisco 15, CHICAGO 14
LA CHARGERS 19, Cleveland 10
OAKLAND 24, NY Giants 17
NEW ORLEANS 31, Carolina 21
LA Rams 32, ARIZONA 16
SEATTLE 24, Philadelphia 10
Pittsburgh 23, CINCINNATI 20

PLAYERS OF THE WEEK
AFC Offense
QB Josh McCown, NY Jets
AFC Defense
S Eric Weddle, Baltimore
AFC Special Teams
K Chris Boswell, Pittsburgh
NFC Offense
QB Russell Wilson, Seattle
NFC Defense
DE Dean Lowry, Green Bay
NFC Special Teams
K Robbie Gould, San Francisco
Pepsi NFL Rookie
RB Alvin Kamara, New Orleans

WEEK 14 / DEC. 7-11

ATLANTA 20, New Orleans 17
BUFFALO 13, Indianapolis 7 (OT)
Dallas 30, NY GIANTS 10
Detroit 24, TAMPA BAY 21
KANSAS CITY 26, Oakland 15
San Francisco 26, HOUSTON 16
Green Bay 27, CLEVELAND 21 (OT)
Chicago 33, CINCINNATI 7
CAROLINA 31, Minnesota 24
LA CHARGERS 30, Washington 13
DENVER 23, NY Jets 0
ARIZONA 12, Tennessee 7
Philadelphia 43, LA RAMS 35
JACKSONVILLE 30, Seattle 24
PITTSBURGH 39, Baltimore 38
MIAMI 27, New England 20

PLAYERS OF THE WEEK
AFC Offense
QB Ben Roethlisberger, Pittsburgh
AFC Defense
CB Xavien Howard, Miami
AFC Special Teams
PR Jaydon Mickens, Jacksonville
NFC Offense
RB Jonathan Stewart, Carolina
NFC Defense
LB Deion Jones, Atlanta
NFC Special Teams
PR/WR Trevor Davis, Green Bay
Pepsi NFL Rookie
RB Jamaal Williams, Green Bay

WEEK 15 / DEC. 14-18

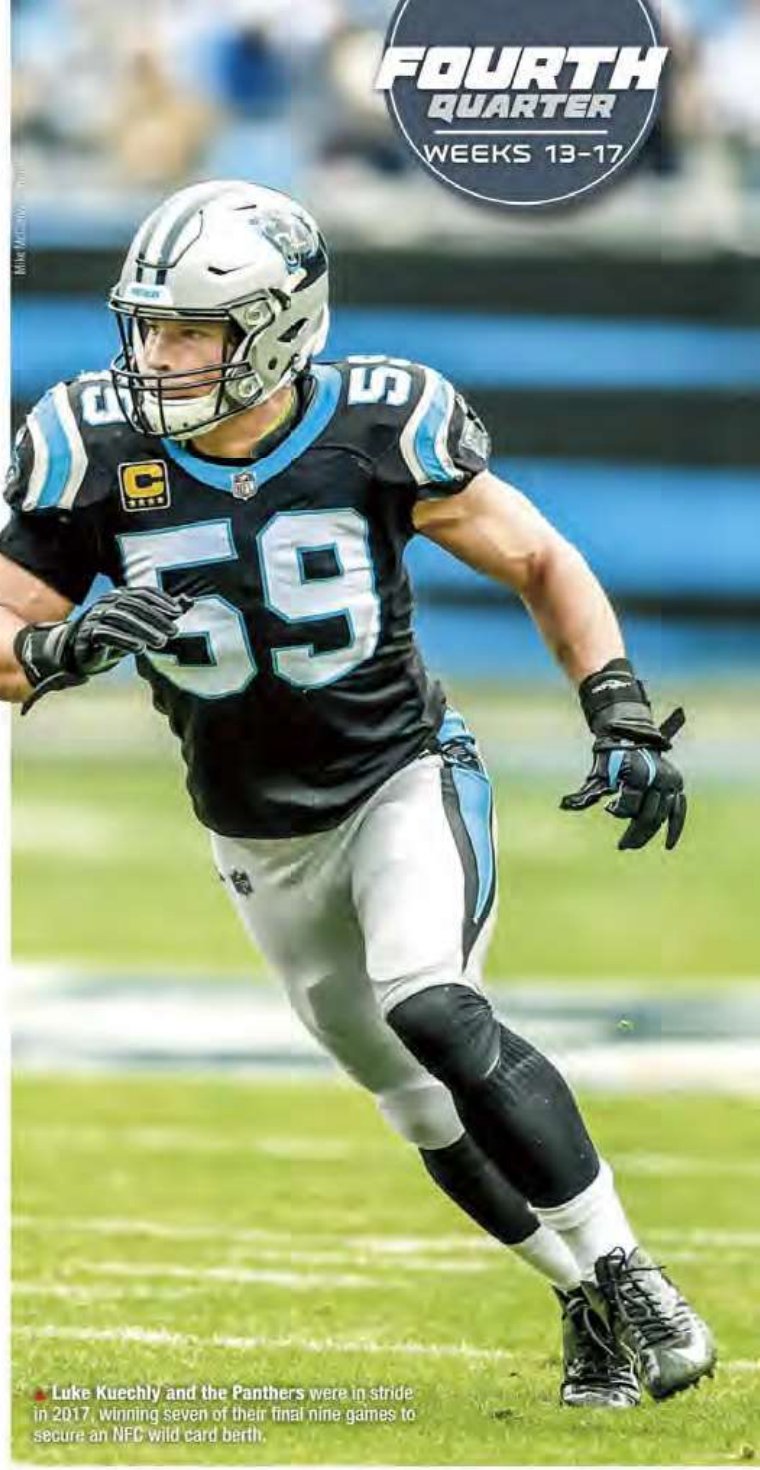
Denver 25, INDIANAPOLIS 13
DETROIT 20, Chicago 10
KANSAS CITY 30, LA Chargers 13
Baltimore 27, CLEVELAND 10
WASHINGTON 20, Arizona 15
Philadelphia 34, NY GIANTS 29
BUFFALO 24, Miami 16
CAROLINA 31, Green Bay 24
JACKSONVILLE 45, Houston 7
MINNESOTA 34, Cincinnati 7
NEW ORLEANS 31, NY Jets 19
LA Rams 42, SEATTLE 7
New England 27, PITTSBURGH 24
SAN FRANCISCO 25, Tennessee 23
Dallas 20, OAKLAND 17
Atlanta 24, TAMPA BAY 21

PLAYERS OF THE WEEK
AFC Offense
TE Rob Gronkowski, New England
AFC Defense
CB Marcus Peters, Kansas City
AFC Special Teams
P Sam Koch, Baltimore
NFC Offense
RB Todd Gurley, LA Rams
NFC Defense
CB Darius Slay, Detroit
NFC Special Teams
K Robbie Gould, San Francisco
Pepsi NFL Rookie
CB Marshon Lattimore, New Orleans

WEEK 16 / DEC. 23-25

BALTIMORE 23, Indianapolis 16
Minnesota 16, GREEN BAY 0
CINCINNATI 26, Detroit 17
KANSAS CITY 29, Miami 13
NEW ENGLAND 37, Buffalo 16
CHICAGO 20, Cleveland 3
CAROLINA 22, Tampa Bay 19
NEW ORLEANS 23, Atlanta 13
WASHINGTON 27, Denver 11
LA Rams 27, TENNESSEE 23
LA Chargers 14, NY JETS 7
SAN FRANCISCO 44, Jacksonville 33
Seattle 21, DALLAS 12
ARIZONA 23, NY Giants 0
Pittsburgh 34, HOUSTON 6
PHILADELPHIA 19, Oakland 10

PLAYERS OF THE WEEK
AFC Offense
RB Dion Lewis, New England
AFC Defense
CB Mike Hilton, Pittsburgh
AFC Special Teams
K Harrison Butker, Kansas City
NFC Offense
RB Todd Gurley, LA Rams
NFC Defense
S Harrison Smith, Minnesota
NFC Special Teams
KR Damiere Byrd, Carolina
Pepsi NFL Rookie
CB Marshon Lattimore, New Orleans



Luke Kuechly and the Panthers were in stride in 2017, winning seven of their final nine games to secure an NFC wild card berth.

WEEK 17 / DEC. 31

NY GIANTS 18, Washington 10
NEW ENGLAND 26, NY Jets 6
MINNESOTA 23, Chicago 10
DETROIT 35, Green Bay 11
INDIANAPOLIS 22, Houston 13
PITTSBURGH 28, Cleveland 24
Dallas 6, PHILADELPHIA 0
San Francisco 34, LA RAMS 13
LA CHARGERS 30, Oakland 10
Kansas City 27, DENVER 24
TENNESSEE 15, Jacksonville 10
TAMPA BAY 31, New Orleans 24
BUFFALO 22, Miami 16
Arizona 26, SEATTLE 24
ATLANTA 22, Carolina 10
Cincinnati 31, BALTIMORE 27

PLAYERS OF THE WEEK
AFC Offense
QB Philip Rivers, LA Chargers
AFC Defense
S Kevin Byard, Tennessee
AFC Special Teams
WR/KR JuJu Smith-Schuster, Pittsburgh
NFC Offense
WR Chris Godwin, Tampa Bay
NFC Defense
DE Ezekiel Ansah, Detroit
NFC Special Teams
K Matt Bryant, Atlanta
Pepsi NFL Rookie
RB Alvin Kamara, New Orleans

TITANS 22
CHIEFS 21

IN A CONTEST THAT FEATURED A DECIDEDLY SPLIT PERSONALITY, TITANS QB MARCUS MARIOTA LED HIS TEAM ON A WILD COMEBACK TO SHOCK THE CHIEFS.

ARROWHEAD STADIUM
Kansas City, Mo. Jan. 6, 2018

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Tennessee	0	3	7	12	22
Kansas City	14	7	0	0	21

1st Quarter
KC Hunt 1 run (Butker kick), 7:23
KC Kelce 13 pass from Smith (Butker kick), 12:45

2nd Quarter
TEN Succop 49 FG, 13:05
KC Robinson 14 pass from Smith (Butker kick), 14:57

3rd Quarter
TEN Mariota 6 pass from Mariota (Succop kick), 8:29

4th Quarter
TEN Henry 35 run (pass failed), 0:52
TEN Decker 22 pass from Mariota (run failed), 8:54

Mariota, making his NFL postseason debut, threw for 205 yards, rushed for 46 more, and tossed two touchdown passes – including one to himself – in rallying Tennessee from an 18-point halftime deficit to an improbable 22-21 win over the AFC West champs at Arrowhead Stadium. The 18-point comeback, which equaled the second-largest by a road team in NFL postseason history, earned the Titans their first playoff victory since 2003.

It all came after an opening 30 minutes dominated by the home team. QB Alex Smith completed 19 of 23 passes for 231 yards and two touchdowns before halftime, while the Chiefs' defense stuffed the Titans at virtually every turn, surrendering only a field goal.

Kansas City scored twice in the first quarter, first on a six-play, 81-yard drive capped by a one-yard plunge by Kareem Hunt, the rookie who led the NFL in rushing this year with 1,327 yards. On the Chiefs' next possession, Smith hit tight end Travis Kelce on a 13-yard TD toss to extend the margin to 14-0. In the second quarter, after a 49-yard Ryan Succop field goal put the Titans on the board, Smith engineered a nine-play march that ended with a 14-yard scoring pass to Demarcus Robinson, sending Kansas City to the locker room with a 21-3 lead.

Marcus Mariota engineered the Titans' big second-half rally that produced the team's first playoff win since 2003.

Momentum began to shift early in the third quarter, when Mariota orchestrated a 91-yard drive that ended with one of the more bizarre plays in NFL history. On third-and-goal from the Chiefs 6, the third-year QB first scrambled right, then cut back left toward the line of scrimmage and fired a pass that cornerback Darrelle Revis batted back at him. Mariota snagged the deflected ball in the air and dashed into the end zone, producing what goes down as a TD pass from "Mariota to Mariota."

From there, Tennessee's offense rolled while its defense rallied. The Titans cut deeper into the Chiefs' lead a minute into the fourth quarter when Derrick Henry, whose 156 rushing yards were the second-most in franchise postseason history, scored on a 35-yard dash, and moved ahead on a Mariota-to-Decker TD connection with 6:06 left. Kansas City would then drive to the Tennessee 44 but was stopped on downs, and the Titans were able to run out the clock from there, clinching the game on Henry's 22-yard carry around left end for a first down.

"This game was a lot like our season," said Mariota, whose team quickly changed focus to the top-seeded Patriots. "It wasn't easy, but we found a way. I'm part of a great team; a great group of guys who believe in each other. It's something special."

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JAGUARS 10
BILLS 3

WITH TWO STIFLING DEFENSES DOMINATING THE DAY, ONLY THE JAGUARS MANAGED TO FIND THE END ZONE, A FEAT THAT EARNED THEM THE RIGHT TO ADVANCE.

It didn't take long to figure out that points would be at a premium, with zeroes filling the scoreboard until deep into the second quarter. The tug-of-war eventually went the Jaguars' way, when QB Blake Bortles bent – and then broke – the Bills' steadfast defense during a long third-quarter drive. A gutsy fourth-and-goal call from the 1-yard line provided for the game's lone touchdown, enough to give the hosts the victory in this Wild Card matchup at EverBank Field.

Buffalo held the Jaguars to just 230 total yards and frustrated Bortles (12 of 23, 87 yards), but for as good as the Bills' defense was, the Jaguars' defense, second-best in the NFL in both yards allowed and points allowed during the regular season, was, on this day, second to none. Jacksonville kept the Bills out of the end zone and limited QB Tyrod Taylor to only 134 yards passing. Buffalo's best offensive weapon was the always dangerous LeSean McCoy, who rushed for 75 yards on 19 carries, but never broke the goal line.

After a scoreless first quarter, Buffalo, making its first postseason appearance since 1999, put together its best drive late in the second, a marathon 18-play, 71-yard march that brought them within a yard of the end zone. But even after the Jags jumped offside on a Bills field goal attempt – giving Buffalo a fresh set of downs – the Jacksonville defense would not yield. An offensive pass interference call and three incompletions later, the Bills were forced to settle for a 31-yard Stephen Hauschka field goal and a 3-0 lead. It would be Buffalo's only trip inside the red zone on the day.

Jacksonville drew even just before the half on Josh Lambo's 44-yard field goal, and put the go-ahead points on the board on its second possession after intermission. Bortles utilized his legs as much as his arm to drive the Jaguars 86 yards in 15 plays, draining more than eight minutes off the clock. The Jags' offense, which had managed just six first downs on the day up to that point, totaled seven on this drive. Facing a fourth-and-goal from the 1-yard line, the coaches eschewed a field goal attempt, leading to Bortles' rocket pass to tight end Ben Koyack in the back of the end zone for a 10-3 lead.

In four fourth-quarter possessions, Buffalo could penetrate no deeper than the Jaguars 38-yard line, and its final threat ended when rookie QB Nathan Peterman was picked off by Jalen Ramsey, sealing the outcome and sending Jacksonville on to Pittsburgh for a Divisional-round contest against the AFC North champs.

Bortles, who finished with a game-high 88 yards rushing, was quick to credit the defense for the franchise's first postseason win since 2007.

"They've been unbelievable all year long," said the fourth-year quarterback. "It allows [the offense] to go out there and not press or get too high or too low. We figured out a way to win and that's all that matters."

EVERBANK FIELD
Jacksonville, Fla. **Jan. 7, 2018**

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Buffalo	0	3	0	0	3
Jacksonville	0	3	7	0	10

2nd Quarter
BUF Hauschka 31 FG, 13:11
JAX Lambo 44 FG, 14:58

3rd Quarter
JAX Koyack 1 pass from Bortles (Lambo kick), 14:18

Jalen Ramsey (20) ended Buffalo's playoff hopes with a late interception that moved the Jaguars into the AFC Divisional round.

NFC WILD CARD

FALCONS 26
RAMS 13

THE DEFENDING NFC CHAMPIONS FOUND THEIR FORM AGAINST THE RAMS AND LOOKED MUCH LIKE A LEGITIMATE THREAT TO RETURN TO THE BIG GAME.

L.A. MEMORIAL COLISEUM
Los Angeles, Calif. Jan. 6, 2018

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Atlanta	6	7	6	7	26
L.A. Rams	0	10	0	3	13

1st Quarter
ATL Bryant 29 FG, 7:47
ATL Bryant 51 FG, 13:37

2nd Quarter
ATL Freeman 3 run (Bryant kick), 3:26
LAR Kupp 14 pass from Goff (Ficken kick), 12:26
LAR Ficken 35 FG, 14:57

3rd Quarter
ATL Bryant 25 FG, 8:15
ATL Bryant 54 FG, 14:41

4th Quarter
LAR Ficken 32 FG, 4:11
ATL Jones 8 pass from Ryan (Bryant kick), 9:12

QB Matt Ryan passed for 218 yards and a touchdown, Devonta Freeman rushed for another score, Matt Bryant kicked four field goals, and Atlanta's defense dominated the NFL's top-scoring offense, a recipe that allowed the Falcons to spoil the Rams' first playoff appearance in 13 years with a 26-13 win at the Los Angeles Coliseum.

Opportunistic play on the part of the Falcons and uncharacteristic mistakes by the Rams played large roles in the outcome. In the first quarter, Atlanta recovered a muffed punt and turned it into a 29-yard Bryant field goal and a 3-0 lead. A 51-yard field goal by Bryant on Atlanta's next possession made it 6-0, and after a fumble on the ensuing kickoff, a three-yard Freeman TD dash put the Falcons up 13-0.

But the Rams, whose 29.9 points per game ranked first in the NFL this season, managed to rally before the half, as quarterback Jared Goff put together a seven-play, 79-yard drive that ended when he connected with rookie receiver Cooper Kupp on a 14-yard touchdown. Sam Ficken's 35-yard field goal then drew Los Angeles within three at 13-10.

Kirby Lee/USA TODAY Sports

Devonta Freeman (24) paced the Falcons' ground attack against the Rams, rushing for 66 yards and one TD.

Though the Falcons' offense didn't put up huge numbers in the second half, they controlled the clock with remarkable efficiency, first mounting a 16-play drive that ate 8:15 off the clock, and then a 10-play drive that took five minutes. Both ended with Bryant field goals to increase Atlanta's lead to 19-10.

A second Ficken field goal pulled the Rams within 19-13, but Ryan responded with the game's most important drive, capped by his eight-yard TD toss to Julio Jones, accounting for the 26-13 final. It was Jones' sixth career playoff touchdown catch.

The Falcons' defense had enough answers for anything the Rams could muster. Goff completed 24 of 45 passes for 259 yards and a TD, while teammate Todd Gurley, whose 1,305 rushing yards ranked first in the NFC this season, gained 101 yards on 14 carries. Rams wideout Robert Woods led all receivers with nine catches for 142 yards. But those numbers wouldn't add up to a win for the NFC West champs.

With the victory, the Falcons earned a ticket to Philadelphia to meet the conference's No. 1 seed in the Divisional round.

"We're going to have to do it the hard way," Freeman said after the win. "Last year, we had a bye, won two home games, and were in the Super Bowl. But sometimes, you've got to go the hard way, and I like these tough challenges. And at the end of the day, we're right where we want to be."

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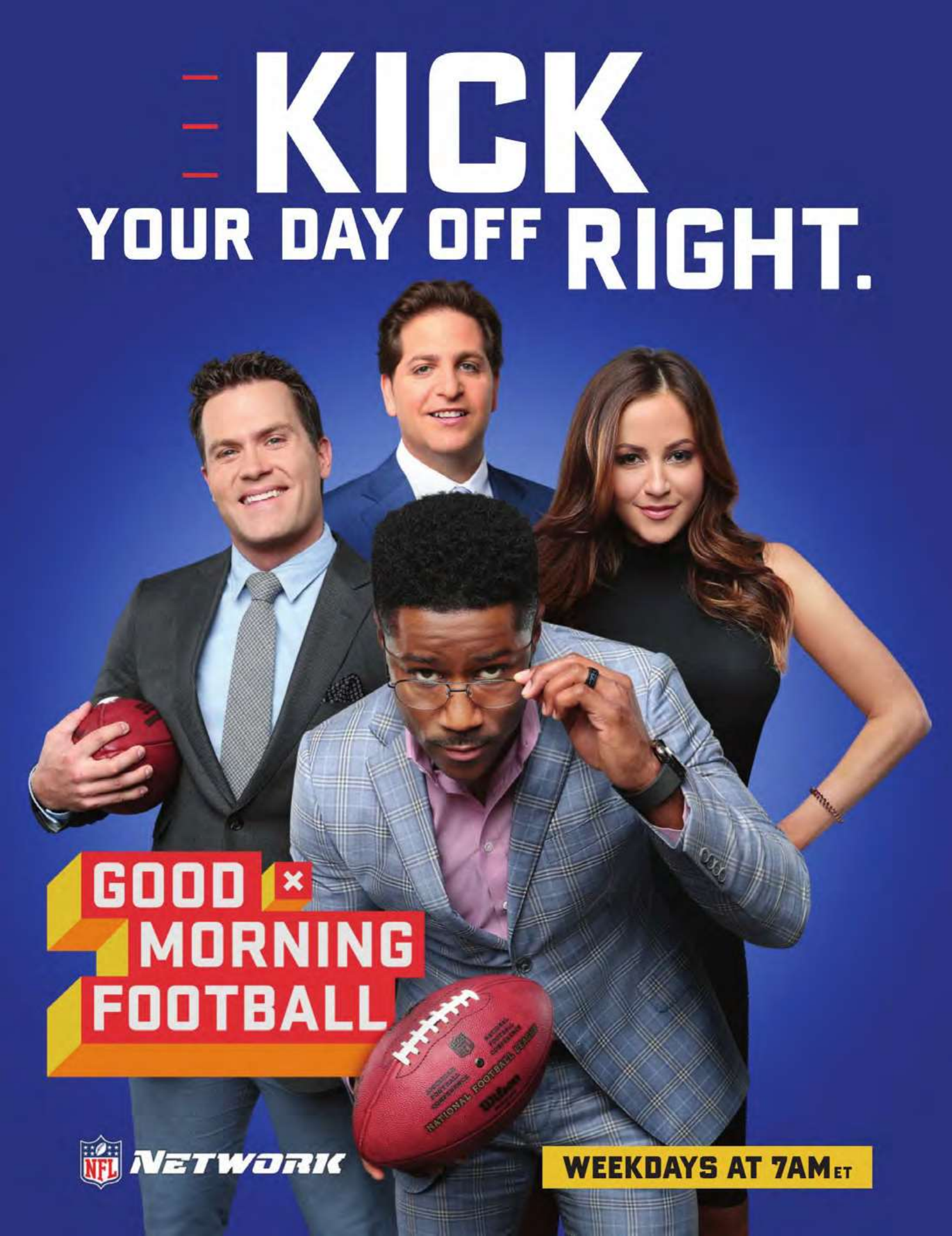
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SAINTS 31
PANTHERS 26

IN A GAME THAT FEATURED AN IMPRESSIVE DISPLAY OF OFFENSIVE FIREPOWER, THE SAINTS PILED UP THE POINTS AND THEN FOUGHT OFF A PANTHERS RALLY.

With Saints QB Drew Brees throwing for 376 yards and two touchdowns and Carolina counterpart Cam Newton taking to the air for 349 yards and another pair of scores, this version of the Battle of New Orleans was a high-flying thrill ride. In the end, the home team made more of its opportunities to claim a 31-26 victory in front of the faithful at the Mercedes-Benz Superdome.

After the Panthers' defense shut down the Saints on their first two possessions, Carolina seemed poised to strike first, but kicker Graham Gano misfired on a 25-yard field goal attempt. Making the missed opportunity even more painful, just two plays after getting the ball back, New Orleans took the lead when Brees connected with former Panther Ted Ginn Jr. on an 80-yard touchdown pass.

Carolina again drove deep into the red zone early in the second, but again was stopped short of the end zone, coming away instead with a Gano field goal. Gano would kick two more field goals in the quarter, but the Saints answered with two more TDs – the first on a Brees-to-Josh Hill pass, the second on a Zach Line run – widening the lead to 21-9 at the half.

Gano and Saints kicker Wil Lutz traded field goals in the third quarter, and on their first possession of the fourth, the Panthers finally found pay dirt when Newton connected with tight end Greg Olsen for a touchdown to make it 24-19.

That score initiated a furious back-and forth that ran up the score and revved up the crowd. First, Brees connected with Michael Thomas on a 46-yard pass play, setting up a two-yard TD run by Alvin Kamara. Newton countered by hitting running back Christian McCaffrey with a short pass that the rookie running back turned into a 56-yard scoring dash, bringing Carolina back within five.

After safety Mike Adams picked off Brees in the closing minutes, the Panthers had an opportunity to grab the win. They drove to the New Orleans 21, but an intentional grounding call cost the team yards and time. A third-down incompletion and a Vonn Bell sack of Newton on fourth down sealed the Saints' third win of the season over Carolina, sending them on to Minnesota to face the Vikings in the NFC Divisional Playoffs.

"We trust our system, and what we proved is we can beat you in a lot of different ways," Brees said after the game. "There's no better feeling than knowing you just won a playoff game as a team and now you're on to the next one."

Ted Ginn Jr. put the Saints' first points on the board against Carolina with an 80-yard TD reception.

Butch Dill/AP Images

MERCEDES-BENZ SUPERDOME
New Orleans, La. Jan. 7, 2018

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Carolina	0	9	3	14	26
New Orleans	7	14	3	7	31

1st Quarter
NO Ginn 80 pass from Brees (Lutz kick), 13:14

2nd Quarter
CAR Gano 27 FG, 0:48
NO Hill 9 pass from Brees (Lutz kick), 5:56
CAR Gano 39 FG, 12:13
NO Line 1 run (Lutz kick), 14:17
CAR Gano 58 FG, 15:00

3rd Quarter
CAR Gano 29 FG 4:02
NO Lutz 57 FG, 8:55

4th Quarter
CAR Olsen 14 pass from Newton (Gano kick), 2:13
NO Kamara 2 run (Lutz kick), 9:52
CAR McCaffrey 56 pass from Newton (Gano kick), 11:51

PATRIOTS 35
TITANS 14

A TITANIC PLAYOFF EFFORT BY A FUTURE HALL OF FAME QUARTERBACK VAULTED NEW ENGLAND INTO THE AFC CHAMPIONSHIP GAME … AGAIN.

GILLETTE STADIUM
Foxborough, Mass. Jan. 13, 2018

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Tennessee	7	0	0	7	14
New England	0	21	7	7	35

1st Quarter
TEN Davis 15 pass from Mariota (Succop kick), 13:46

2nd Quarter
NE White 5 pass from Brady (Gostkowski kick), 1:42
NE White 6 run (Gostkowski kick), 5:40
NE Hogan 15 pass from Brady (Gostkowski kick), 13:08

3rd Quarter
NE Bolden 2 run (Gostkowski kick), 10:58

4th Quarter
NE Gronkowski 4 pass from Brady (Gostkowski kick), 4:38
TEN Davis 11 pass from Mariota (Succop kick), 13:05

Tom Brady threw for three touchdowns on his way to a 337-yard night, Dion Lewis racked up 62 yards rushing and 79 receiving, and the duo of Danny Amendola and Rob Gronkowski combined for another 193 reception yards as the Patriots executed a balanced attack to take out the Titans, 35-14, at Gillette Stadium.

There was little in the first quarter to hint at such a one-sided outcome. In fact, after the Titans' defense stifled New England on its first two possessions, Tennessee QB Marcus Mariota engineered a brilliant 95-yard scoring drive that ended with his 15-yard TD toss to Corey Davis, putting the visitors ahead, 7-0. The rest of the game, however, belonged to New England.

First, Brady connected with James White on a short touchdown pass to tie the score. White then reached the end zone with a six-yard dash. And with less than two minutes to play in the half, Brady found Chris Hogan in the end zone for another score, sending the Patriots into the locker room owning a 21-7 halftime lead.

That momentum carried into the third quarter, as New England marched nine plays on its second drive, capped by a Brandon Bolden TD run. In the fourth, Brady took the team 90 yards, the last of those coming on a perfectly placed four-yard toss to Gronkowski that increased New England's lead to 35-7. It marked Brady's 10th career postseason game with at least three touchdown passes, breaking a tie with Joe Montana for the most in NFL history.

Jim Rogash/Getty Images

Chris Hogan (15) scores on a 15-yard touchdown reception to give the Patriots a 21-7 lead.

Though a second Mariota-to-Davis TD halted the Patriots' streak of 35 unanswered points, the Titans' young signal-caller found himself constantly harassed by the swarming New England defense, which racked up a team playoff record eight sacks. Mariota ended the game 22 of 37 for 244 yards through the air and rushed for another 37 yards.

With the win, the top-seeded Patriots earned their way into a record seventh consecutive AFC Championship Game.

"I just try to be consistent, show up, and do the best I can do every week for the team," said Brady after the win. "Regardless of whether I'm the worst quarterback in the league or the best quarterback in the league, or somewhere in between, it's just my job to do the best I can.

"The reality of the NFL is that what we did this week will have nothing to do with what happens next week," added Brady. "We're going to have to repeat it, so you've got to get right back to work [so we can] go out there and try to cut it loose one more time in a huge game."

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JAGUARS 45
STEELERS 42

JACKSONVILLE STARTED FAST AND FINISHED FURIOUS, UNLEASHING AN AWESOME OFFENSIVE ASSAULT THAT OVERWHELMED THE AFC NORTH CHAMPIONS.

QB Blake Bortles threw for 214 yards and a TD, and Leonard Fournette rushed for 109 yards and three scores, as the surging Jaguars stopped the Steelers, 45-42, in a sizzling shootout at Heinz Field to keep their playoff run going.

Jacksonville, best-known for its AFC-best defense, raced out to a 21-0 lead that put the hosts in a hole from which they could never completely recover. The Jaguars opened the game with an eight-play, 66-yard drive, capped by a daring fourth-and-goal plunge from Fournette. After linebacker Myles Jack grabbed an interception on Pittsburgh's next drive, Fournette scored again, this time on an 18-yard sprint. A T.J. Yeldon touchdown run followed, before Pittsburgh finally broke the ice with Ben Roethlisberger's 23-yard scoring toss to Antonio Brown.

On the Steelers' next possession, however, a strip sack of Roethlisberger was recovered by linebacker Telvin Smith, who scampered 50 yards for yet another Jaguars TD.

Undeterred, Roethlisberger (37 of 58, 469 yards, 5 TDs) hit Martavis Bryant on a scoring toss to make it 28-14 at half, and the offensive fireworks continued after the break.

The fourth quarter alone saw 38 points scored, but also a critical defensive play when the Jaguars stopped Pittsburgh on a fourth-and-one while nursing a seven-point lead. They immediately cashed in, with Fournette's third TD of the day extending the margin to 35-21. Pittsburgh continue to answer back, however, and closed the gap to 42-35 when a scrambling Roethlisberger crossed the line of scrimmage before lateraling to Le'Veon Bell, who ran eight yards for a touchdown with 2:18 to play.

But after the ensuing onside kick attempt was recovered by Jacksonville, the Jags added insurance points on a Josh Lambo field goal. That rendered the Steelers' final TD as just an afterthought, while Jacksonville advanced to the AFC title game for the third time in its history.

"We knew we had to keep scoring and be efficient and make plays," said Bortles, whose team improved to 10-0 this season when not committing a turnover. "The last couple of weeks we've kind of struggled (offensively). Today we put it all together and the guys played their tails off."

HEINZ FIELD
Pittsburgh, Pa. **Jan. 14, 2018**

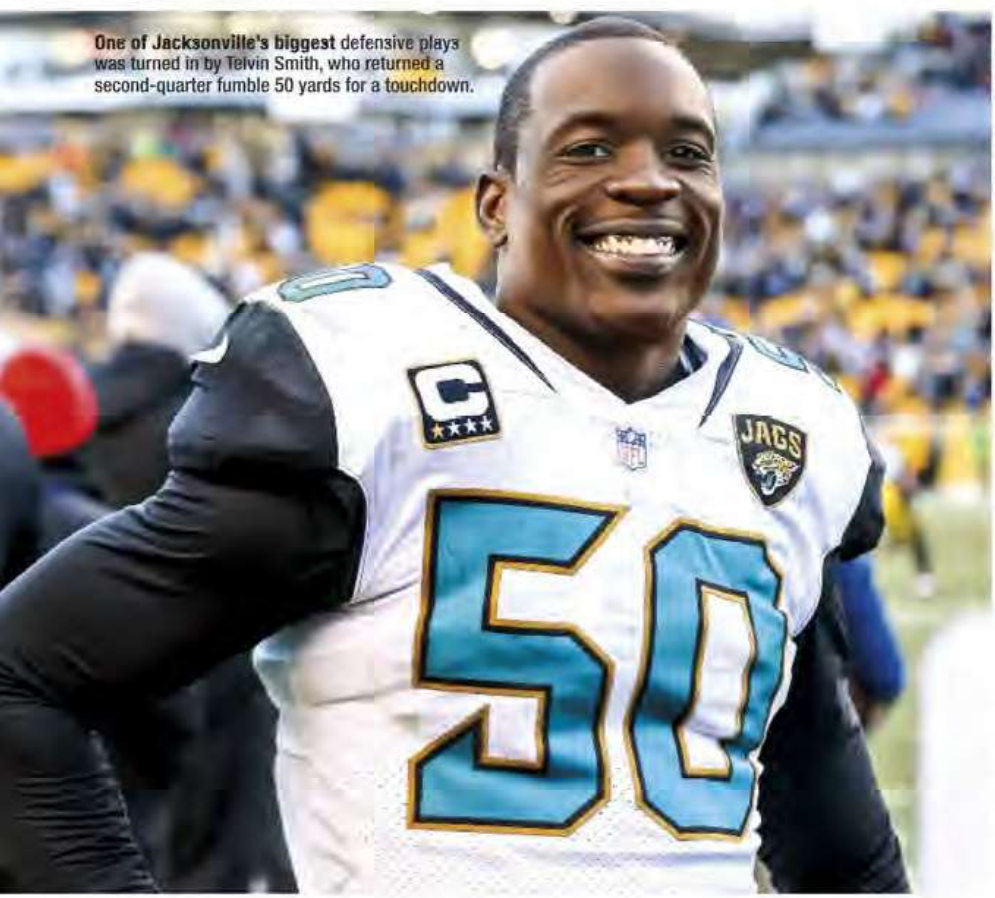
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Jacksonville	14	14	0	17	45
Pittsburgh	0	14	7	21	42

1st Quarter
JAX Fournette 1 run (Lambo kick), 4:20
JAX Fournette 18 run (Lambo kick), 9:34

2nd Quarter
JAX Yeldon 4 run (Lambo kick), 3:29
PIT Brown 23 pass from Roethlisberger (Boswell kick), 6:40
JAX Smith 50 fumble return (Lambo kick), 12:20
PIT Bryant 36 pass from Roethlisberger (Boswell kick), 14:35

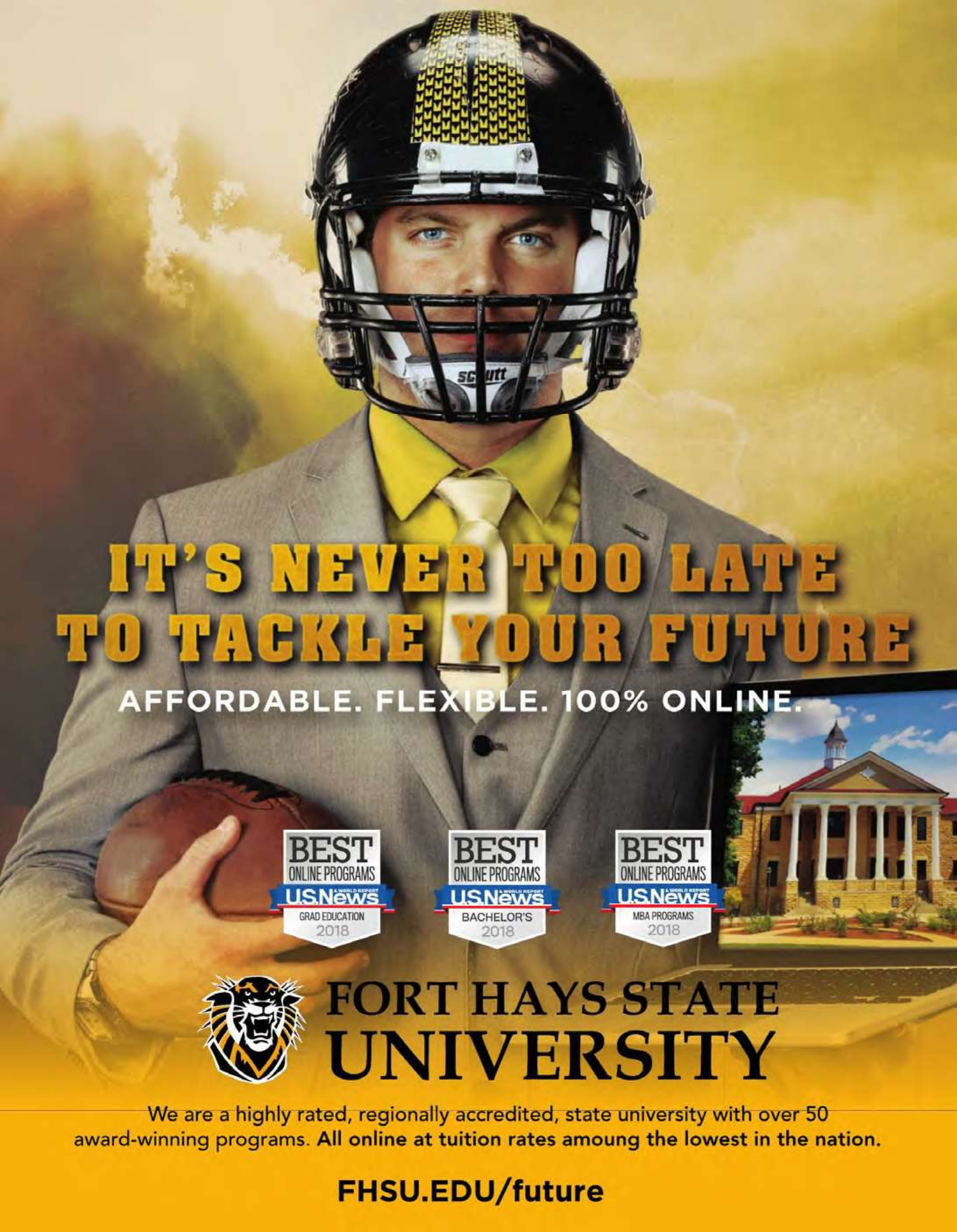
3rd Quarter
PIT Bell 19 pass from Roethlisberger (Boswell kick), 5:51

4th Quarter
JAX Fournette 3 run (Lambo kick), 4:26
PIT Brown 43 pass from Roethlisberger (Boswell kick), 5:55
JAX Bohanon 24 pass from Bortles (Lambo kick),10:41
PIT Bell 8 run (Boswell kick), 12:42
JAX Lambo 45 FG, 13:15
PIT Smith-Schuster 4 pass from Roethlisberger (Boswell kick), 14:59



One of Jacksonville's biggest defensive plays was turned in by Telvin Smith, who returned a second-quarter fumble 50 yards for a touchdown.

Geoff Burke/USA TODAY Sports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NFC DIVISIONAL

EAGLES 15
FALCONS 10

PHILLY'S DEFENSE OWNED THE GAME'S BIGGEST MOMENT, MAKING A FIERCE FINAL STAND TO MOVE THE EAGLES A STEP CLOSER TO THE SUPER BOWL.

LINCOLN FINANCIAL FIELD
Philadelphia, Pa. Jan. 13, 2018

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
Atlanta	3	7	0	0	10
Philadelphia	0	9	3	3	15

1st Quarter
ATL Bryant 33 FG, 5:56

2nd Quarter
PHI Blount 1 run (kick failed), 4:32
ATL Freeman 6 pass from Ryan (Bryant kick), 9:19
PHI Elliott 53 FG, 15:00

3rd Quarter
PHI Elliott 37 FG, 14:49

4th Quarter
PHI Elliott 21 FG, 8:58

Despite the fact that both the defending NFC champion Falcons and the top-seeded Eagles boasted explosive offenses during the regular season, points were at a premium in this clash. Each team found the end zone just once, and with the Eagles' defense systematically neutralizing the Falcons' best offensive weapons, kicker Jake Elliott proved the difference, hitting three field goals to give the hosts a 15-10 win at a bone-chilling Lincoln Financial Field.

Even as the conference's No. 1 seed, the Eagles wore the underdog mantle against the Falcons. And they wore it well. QB Nick Foles brushed off a slow start and found his feet in the second half, finishing 23 of 30 for 246 yards and engineering a pair of lengthy drives that produced the decisive points.

Atlanta struck first, converting a fumble recovery into a 33-yard Matt Bryant field goal and an early 3-0 lead. In the second quarter, the Eagles tallied their lone touchdown of the game – a LeGarrette Blount one-yard run around the right edge on fourth-and-goal.

The Eagles' defense then shut down Atlanta on its next possession, but Matt Bosher's punt hit two Eagles players before being recovered by the Falcons, setting up quarterback Matt Ryan with a short field. Four plays later, he avoided pressure long enough to flip a six-yard TD to Devonta Freeman, giving the lead back to Atlanta. The Eagles, though, made it a one-point game on the final play of the half when Elliott booted a 53-yard field goal into the wind.

In the second half, Foles engineered drives of 12 and 14 plays that lasted nearly 13 minutes combined, both ending with Elliott field goals and providing Philly with a five-point lead.

But the starring role over the game's final 30 minutes belonged to the Eagles' defense, which forced six punts on the Falcons' seven second-half possessions. The biggest play came with the game on the line, as this defense – which had allowed zero points in the last two minutes of a game throughout the regular season – again held its ground with a gritty goal line stand as the clock ran down.

On fourth-and-goal from the 2-yard line with just 1:05 remaining, Ryan sprinted right looking for wide receiver Julio Jones, but his toss into the back corner of the end zone couldn't be hauled in, and with it Atlanta's hopes of returning to the Super Bowl slipped away.

"This was a team win," said Foles after directing Philadelphia to its first postseason victory since 2008, when it also reached the NFC title game. "We do this together. Not any one person has to be superhuman. It alleviates a lot of the pressure when you know every single guy is playing for each other."

Matt Rourke/AP Images

Jalen Mills (31) celebrates after the Eagles stopped Atlanta in the final minute to preserve their 15-10 victory.

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NFC DIVISIONAL

VIKINGS 29
SAINTS 24

IN AN ELECTRIFYING CONTEST THAT BECAME AN INSTANT CLASSIC, MINNESOTA PRODUCED A MIRACLE FINISH TO EARN A TRIP TO THE NFC TITLE GAME.

Stefon Diggs caught a 61-yard TD pass from Case Keenum as time expired to lift the Vikings to a miraculous 29-24 victory over the Saints at U.S. Bank Stadium. It was an improbable ending to an incredible game that featured four lead changes in the final 3:01, pulling the NFC North champs back from the brink of elimination.

In a first half that gave no indication of what was to come, the Vikings dominated on both sides of the ball while building a big lead. Minnesota scored on its first possession, as Keenum directed an eight-play drive that culminated with Jerick McKinnon's 14-yard TD run. A Kai Forbath field goal made it 10-0, and after safety Andrew Sendejo's interception, Keenum marched the Vikings 12 plays in just over six minutes, capped with a one-yard Latavius Murray TD run.

A solid Saints drive late in the second quarter was halted in the red zone when Anthony Barr picked off QB Drew Brees at the Vikings 10-yard line, leaving the score 17-0. It marked the first time in 61 games, dating back to 2014, that the Saints had been shut out in the first half.

Stefon Diggs heads into the end zone with his game-winning touchdown catch against the Saints.

Andy Lyons/AP Images

U.S. BANK STADIUM
Minneapolis, Minn. Jan. 14, 2018

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	F
New Orleans	0	0	7	17	24
Minnesota	10	7	0	12	29

1st Quarter
MIN McKinnon 14 run (Forbath kick), 5:15
MIN Forbath 20 FG, 10:18

2nd Quarter
MIN Murray 1 run (Forbath kick), 5:02

3rd Quarter
NO Thomas 14 pass from Brees (Lutz kick), 13:42

4th Quarter
NO Thomas 3 pass from Brees (Lutz kick), 1:51
MIN Forbath 49 FG, 4:48
NO Kamara 14 pass from Brees (Lutz kick), 11:59
MIN Forbath 53 FG, 13:31
NO Lutz 43 FG, 14:35
MIN Diggs 61 pass from Keenum (run failed), 15:00

Fortunes quickly changed after the break as Brees engineered a 12-play drive, capped by his 14-yard touchdown pass to Michael Thomas. Marcus Williams' interception then set up another Brees-to-Thomas touchdown to bring the Saints within three points early in the fourth quarter.

A 49-yard Forbath field goal was followed by Brees' 14-yard scoring throw to Alvin Kamara that gave the Saints the lead. Forbath answered with a 53-yard field goal to put the Vikings back in front, 23-21, only to see Brees counter with an 11-play drive that set up Wil Lutz's 43-yard field goal attempt. When his kick went through the uprights with 25 seconds left, it seemed as though the Saints had sewn up the victory.

And then came the Minnesota Miracle.

On third-and-10, with just 10 seconds to go and no timeouts remaining, Keenum lofted a sideline pass to Diggs at the Saints 34. Leaping, Diggs made the grab, and when the defender missed the tackle, the Vikings receiver regained his balance, slipped away, and dashed untouched into the end zone with the winning score as the clock counted down to zero.

"In the huddle, Case said, 'I'm gonna give somebody a chance,'" said Diggs afterward. "And that somebody was me."

Connecticut-based writer ***Mark Preston*** *wrote the Wild Card and Divisional Round recaps for the* Super Bowl LII program.

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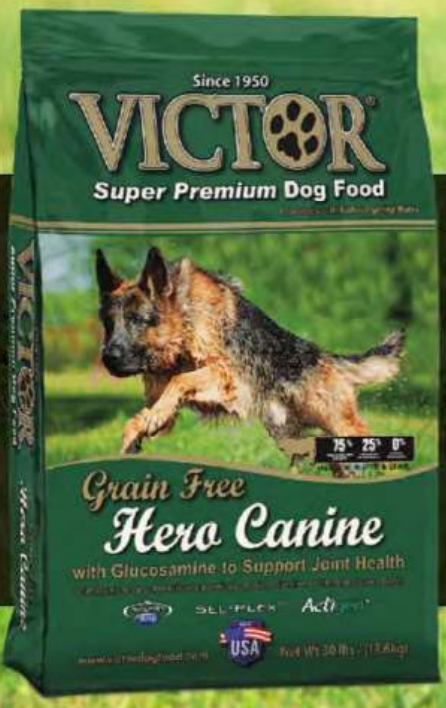

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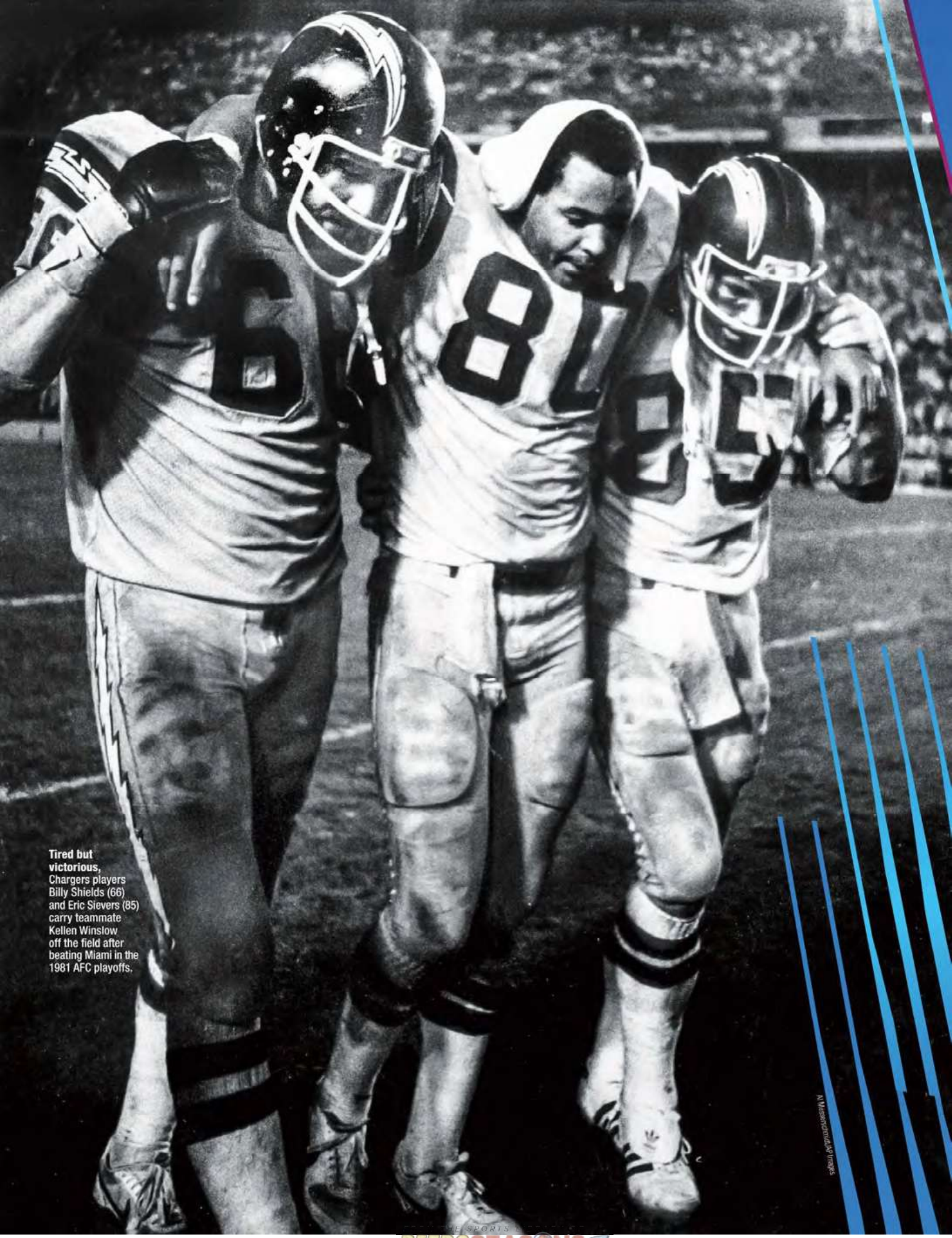


Tired but victorious, Chargers players Billy Shields (66) and Eric Sievers (85) carry teammate Kellen Winslow off the field after beating Miami in the 1981 AFC playoffs.

Al Messerschmidt/AFP Images

"...AND WE'RE GOING INTO OVERTIME!"

LAST YEAR'S SUPER BOWL HAS PLENTY OF COMPANY WHEN IT COMES TO PLAYOFF THRILLERS THAT HAVE NEEDED MORE THAN 60 MINUTES TO DETERMINE A WINNER. ***BY VINCE CASEY***

EVEN JOHNNY UNITAS DIDN'T KNOW.

Sure, it was for the 1958 NFL championship – the equivalent to today's Super Bowl – but extending an NFL game into a fifth period had never been done before.

So the 25-year-old future Hall of Fame quarterback was as mystified as his Baltimore Colts teammates on that foggy, drizzly Dec. 28 day at Yankee Stadium as they stood in a 17-17 tie with the New York Giants at the end of regulation. They were wondering, believe it or not, "Who's the winner?"

"When the game ended in a tie, we were standing on the sidelines waiting to see what came next," remembered Unitas years later. "All of a sudden, the officials came over and said, 'Send your captain out. We're going to flip a coin to see who will receive.' That was the first we heard of the overtime period."

It didn't seem to faze "Johnny U" one bit.

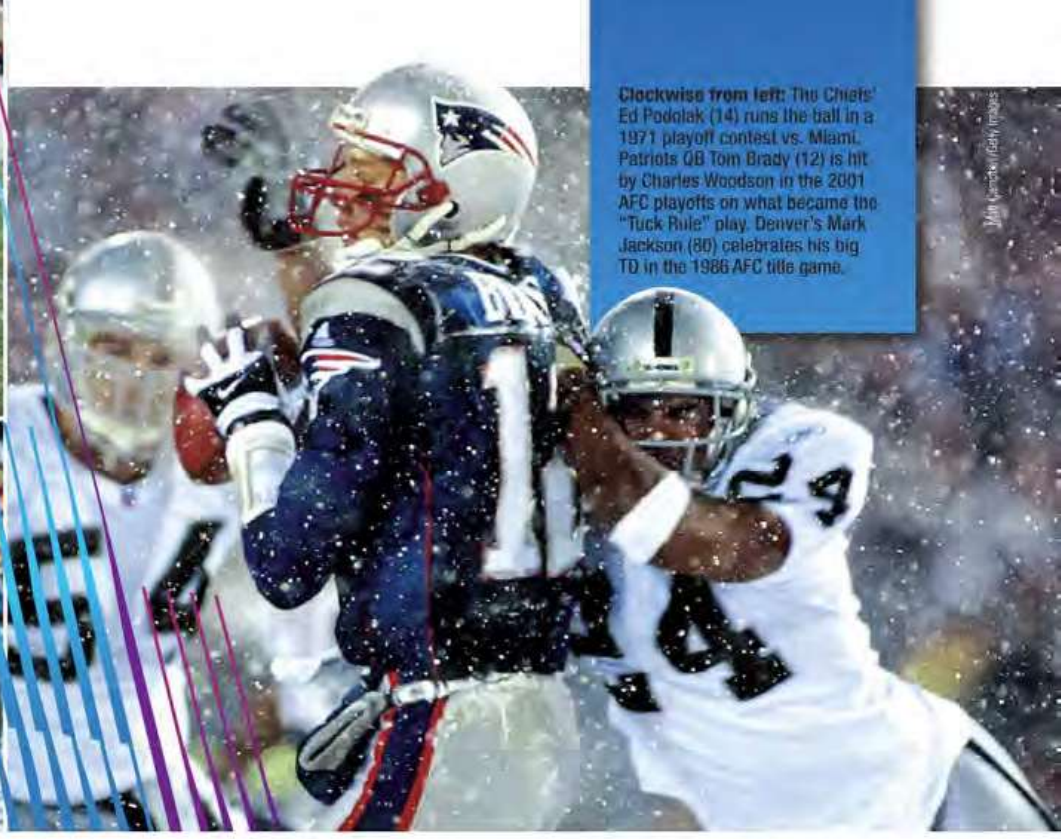
After the Giants went three-and-out, Unitas led Baltimore on a 13-play, 80-yard drive capped by Alan Ameche's rumbling one-yard touchdown run, a play captured in a forever-iconic Associated Press photo.

Many consider the game – entitled by *Sports Illustrated* as "The Best Game Ever Played," with "Best" soon becoming "Greatest" – as the birth of the modern-day NFL.

And it was the beginning of NFL postseason overtime – a rule that just 12 months ago decided another league title: the shocking … exhausting … this-can't-be-happening … 25-point second-half comeback by the New England Patriots that ended with a 34-28 win over the Atlanta Falcons in Super Bowl LI.

In the years between these two NFL title-deciding games, there have been many other overtime postseason contests just as memorable.

With that in mind, we present five "Wow!" OT playoff games between the 1958 "Greatest Game Ever Played" and the "Brady-Bunch Comeback" in Super Bowl LI.



Clockwise from left: The Chiefs' Ed Podolak (14) runs the ball in a 1971 playoff contest vs. Miami. Patriots QB Tom Brady (12) is hit by Charles Woodson in the 2001 AFC playoffs on what became the "Tuck Rule" play. Denver's Mark Jackson (80) celebrates his big TD in the 1986 AFC title game.

THE LONGEST GAME

It was just your run-of-the-mill, six-quarter NFL game. On Christmas Day, no less!

More than 46 years later, some of the guys who played in it are probably still tired.

On Dec. 25, 1971, the first time NFL games were played on Christmas Day, the Kansas City Chiefs hosted the Miami Dolphins in the AFC divisional playoffs.

It went on … and on … and, yes, on. So did Chiefs running back Ed Podolak, who would set a league playoff record with 350 all-purpose yards.

"In the sixth quarter, I looked at (Dolphins linebacker) Nick Buoniconti and said, 'Do you think this thing will ever be over?'" recalls Podolak.

Finally, after touchdowns, field goals, blocked kicks, interceptions, fumbles, and whatever else you can imagine, Miami's Garo Yepremian lined up for a 37-yard field goal attempt and – yes! – made it. Miami 27, Kansas City 24.

Game … finally … over. After 82 minutes, 40 seconds of football.

That night, long after midnight, Dolphins quarterback Bob Griese returned home. His wife, Judi, still had all the Christmas tree lights blazing. She said they would open their presents the next morning.

"That was all right with me," Bob says. "I'd already had mine."

THE EPIC IN MIAMI

It was hot. Like really hot.

And then there was the temperature.

Mix together unforgettable plays, rocking back-and-forth ties and lead changes, superb performances – and then throw in your typical Miami-heat-and-humidity-85-degrees-on Jan. 2-weather – and you have what's been called the "Epic in Miami."

You know, that 1981 AFC Divisional Playoff Game between the San Diego Chargers and Miami Dolphins that produced the classic photo of exhausted Chargers tight end Kellen Winslow being helped off the field by two teammates.

It all began with the Chargers racing to a 24-0 first-quarter lead, but the game was far from over. Miami zoomed back in the second quarter, scoring 17 straight points.

The second half? Well, the game was tied three times, finally at 38-38, and headed into overtime when the 6-foot-5 Winslow blocked the potential game-winning field goal with just seconds left.

"I think I got one finger on it," he says.

Both teams had already missed field goals in overtime when Chargers QB Dan Fouts took the field and engineered a 74-yard drive, completing four of five passes to set up Rolf Benirschke's game-winning 29-yard field goal. After the kick, Winslow needed the assistance of teammates Billy Shields and Eric Sievers to make it back to the locker room.

"It was like all the adrenalin rushed out of me," Winslow explains, "and all the fatigue and soreness rushed in."

But it made for a great photo.

THE DRIVE

High-fives for The Drive.

John Elway received a lot of the former during his 16-year NFL career; but the latter boosted him into the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

The Hall writes that Elway's direction and performance on the "superb" 98-yard drive that lifted the Denver Broncos into a tie in the 1986 AFC Championship Game against the Cleveland Browns "ranks as pro football's prototype performance in the clutch."

It's hard to disagree. But some of his teammates on that cold Cleveland day of Jan. 11, 1987, might have thought that their quarterback was dreaming when he said with 5:32 left to play and the ball on their own 2-yard line that, "We have them right where we want them."

All Elway did over the next five-plus minutes was take his team those 98 yards in 15 plays, earning six first downs while completing six passes. "Shocking" was the only word for it when, with 37 seconds left, he connected with wide receiver Mark Jackson on a five-yard scoring pass and Rich Karlis kicked the extra point to tie it all up, 20-20.

Overtime? After Denver forced a Cleveland punt on the opening drive, Elway marched the

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Left: Alan Ameche lunges across the goal line to win the 1958 NFL championship for the Colts. **Right:** The Patriots' James White reaches the end zone with the overtime TD that ended Super Bowl LI.

Broncos 60 yards in nine plays to put Karlis in position for the AFC championship-winning 33-yard field goal.

"When our backs are closest to the wall is when we really play our best," quipped Elway after the game. "And we couldn't get any closer to the wall."

With Elway behind center, that wall came crashing down.

THE COMEBACK

What's college for, if not to learn?

That's exactly the lesson that quarterback – and student of the game – Frank Reich used as inspiration for one of the most stunning NFL rallies ever: in a 1992 AFC Wild Card Game.

Nine years earlier, as a backup QB pressed into duty for the University of Maryland, Reich engineered an unfathomable comeback from a 31-0 deficit to stun the previously unbeaten Miami Hurricanes, 42-40. That 31-point rally stood as the college record until 2006.

So it was "old hat" on Jan. 3, 1993, when backup Reich, now with the Buffalo Bills, started in place of an injured Jim Kelly and "déjà-vued" the Houston Oilers. He actually one-upped it … this time his team trailed by 32 points.

Overwhelmed early on, the host Bills appeared all but done after Bubba McDowell's 58-yard interception-return touchdown put the Oilers up, 35-3, early in the third quarter.

That's when Bills coach Marv Levy uttered these prophetic words: "Frank, you're going to lead the greatest comeback in the NFL."

The unflappable Reich proceeded to drive Buffalo to five straight touchdowns, the final one on a 17-yard pass to Andre Reed that put the Bills in front, 38-35, with just 3:08 to play.

The Oilers then showed some fight of their own, driving for a field goal to send the game to overtime. Houston won the toss, but on his third pass of overtime and 50th of the day, Oilers QB Warren Moon was intercepted by Nate Odomes. Three plays later, Steve Christie's 32-yarder won it for Buffalo, 41-38.

Reich (21 of 34, 289 yards, 4 TDs) had done it again, this time with the biggest comeback in NFL history.

"I just took it one play at a time," he said. "When you're down by 32 points, you don't really feel a lot of pressure."

Especially if you're Frank Reich.

THE TUCK RULE GAME

NFL Rule 3, Section 22, Article 2, Note 2.

In other words, the "Tuck Rule" – which doesn't exist anymore.

But it sure did on the snowy evening of Jan. 19, 2002, in Foxborough, Mass., in the AFC Divisional Playoff Game between the Oakland Raiders and New England Patriots. Football fans were about to learn a lot about an arcane rule that, to some, defied logic.

To set the scene …

With Oakland ahead, 13-10, and just 1:50 left in the game and the ball on the Raiders 42-yard line, young Patriots quarterback Tom Brady dropped back to pass, but saw no open receivers. With pressure quickly coming, Brady began to pull the football back to his chest when he was whacked on his right side by Oakland cornerback Charles Woodson. The ball bounced away and was recovered by linebacker Greg Biekert.

Game over, right? Not quite.

Referee Walt Coleman ruled the play a fumble, but since less than two minutes remained, officials reviewed it on video replay. When he saw the tape, Coleman determined it was an incomplete pass – thanks to the little-used "tuck rule." The rule stated that any intentional forward movement of a player's throwing arm starts a forward pass, even if that player loses possession of the ball while attempting to tuck it into his body.

The original call was voided, and the Patriots kept possession.

"I knew what the ruling should have been," Patriots coach Bill Belichick said afterward, "because we had dealt with that play a little bit earlier in the year (against the Jets) on the other side of it."

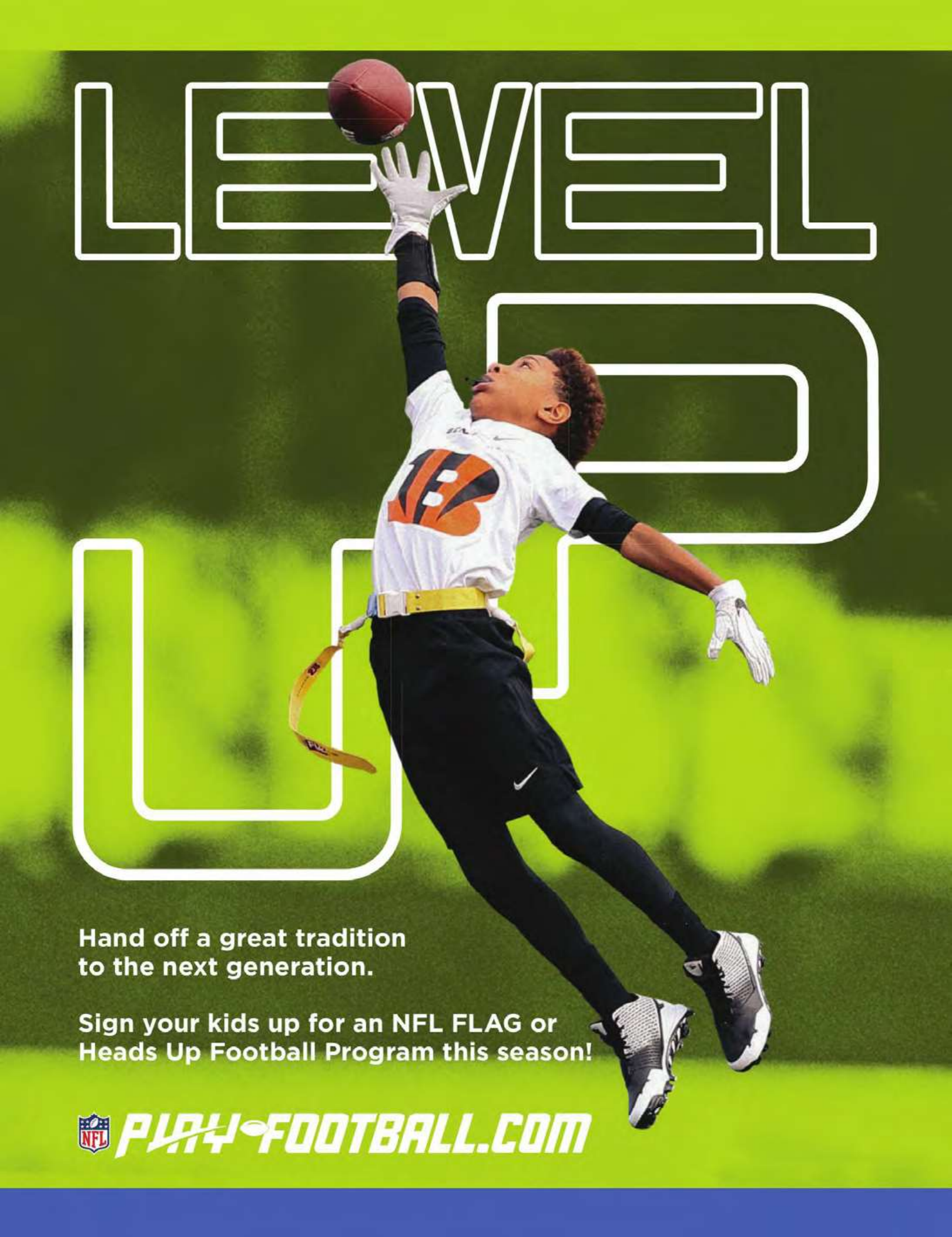
Five plays later, Adam Vinatieri trotted out for what would be, given the conditions, an extremely difficult 45-yard field goal attempt. But the kick bulleted through the snow – and the uprights – to send the game into overtime.

Momentum was now all on the Patriots' side. They won the toss and drove 61 yards in 15 plays. With the ball on the 5, Vinatieri and holder Ken Walter cleared the snow from the spot on which the ball would be spotted. The kick was good and the Patriots, after being so close to elimination, were on their way to their first of five Super Bowl titles.

In 2013, the NFL abolished the Tuck Rule. The Raiders, for one, were not sorry to see it go.

"Adios, Tuck Rule," they tweeted.

__Vince Casey__ worked in public relations for the NFL league office in New York for 16 seasons and is now a freelance writer.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SUPER
BOWL

TECH ADVANCEMENTS HAVE ENRICHED THE NFL FAN EXPERIENCE, BOTH AT HOME AND AT THE GAME.

BY ADITI KINKHABWALA

ECTED

FIRST THERE WAS REPLAY.

Then there were yard lines superimposed in yellow on the field.

Then came the skycam, mounted on a zip line above the action, and pylon cameras. There were high-definition videoboards inside stadiums, and Wi-Fi, too, and, of course, now hashtags, connecting the football community one social media post at a time.

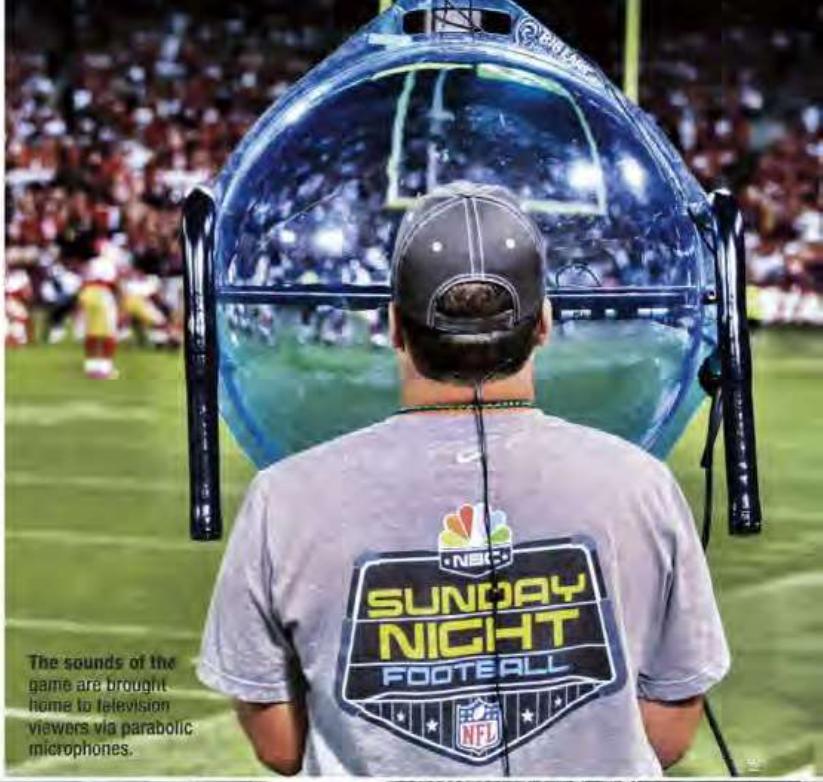
Every year, technology's reach pulls football fans closer to the game they love, be it from their couch, a stadium seat, or their mobile device. And it's not just in the "hows" a game is consumed, but in the "ways" too. Super Bowl LII will be streamed online, making any viewer ambulatory now – from the bar to a party or a concourse to the restroom.

And that's just one example, in a bold new world that keeps getting bolder.

Fred Gaudelli still counts the high-speed, ultra-slow motion camera as one of the biggest game-changers in the broadcast of football games. Gaudelli, the executive producer of NBC's *Sunday Night Football* and of this year's Super Bowl broadcast, is a game-changer in his own right. He began his career at ESPN in 1983 and spent 11 years as the coordinating producer of *Sunday Night Football* there, became lead producer for then-ABC's *Monday Night Football* in 2001, and in 2005 went to NBC. When asked about a major technological advance under his watch, he immediately points to his third Super Bowl, XLIII in Tampa, when Steelers linebacker James Harrison chugged his way to an unforgettable 100-yard interception-return touchdown against the Cardinals.

"Did he get in on top of Larry Fitzgerald?" Gaudelli remembers thinking, as he played five versions of the final goal line flip for his viewers, each progressively slower and ultimately showing that, yes, a completely gassed Harrison was indeed in the end zone.

Since then, the roster of cameras and their distinct abilities have only grown. Images captured by cameras play an enormous role in officiating replays, meaning that goal lines and end lines all have to be covered. FOX used 70 cameras at last year's Super Bowl in Houston and introduced a replay camera that could rotate any play 360 degrees. Gaudelli says more important for him for this year's game is not how many 4K cameras he has, but in how he chooses to deploy them.



The sounds of the game are brought home to television viewers via parabolic microphones.

NBC will showcase an upper camera system (top right of photo) at Super Bowl LII, providing viewers with a higher angle than the typical skycam location above the field.

"The worst thing you can do is to do something because you're able to do it. It all has to fit," he says.

Every game producer, be it one in a broadcast truck or in a stadium's control room, has to find a way to fit one of the newest "hows" a game is taken in, namely via a second screen. Phones, tablets – they're ubiquitous – and Richard Deitsch, *Sports Illustrated*'s media writer, says it's a rare fan who isn't monitoring something online while watching a game.

"We're living in a social media world," he says.

The Super Bowl is arguably the single biggest communal experience in the country, with that community being connected like never before through the threads of social media and across social digital channels. According to the NFL, last year's *Super Bowl Halftime Show* netted 2.2 million real-time tweets, and the league's metrics counted 5.1 million tweets leading up to, during, and in the 10 minutes following Lady Gaga's performance. Facebook, meanwhile, reported that 64 million people posted 240 million interactions over the course of the evening.

Broadcasters have no option but to incorporate output from those platforms in their reportage. But Deitsch says, from his vantage point, there's a definite challenge for broadcasters in balancing their in-stadium coverage with what is happening in the social media universe.

"This is where the human element really comes in," he says. "[Broadcasters] can't be cluttering up your screen with a million different things, but they have to pay attention to what's happening on social media. It's figuring out how to incorporate what's smart."

Gaudelli says he always has someone monitoring social media, and, thus far, when to include a tweet in his broadcast has been obvious. Such was the case earlier this season, when Mike Tirico walked up to him and played Texans defensive end J.J. Watt's tweeted plea for donations

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The dynamic producer/director team of Fred Gaudelli (left) and Drew Esocoff will guide NBC's coverage of Super Bowl LII.

Fan engagement in today's NFL can include the use of an official Twitter hashtag and emoji as done by the Vikings (above).

to Hurricane Harvey victims. Gaudelli says he immediately got on the headset to his control room.

"Social media, whether you hate it or love it, it's in the culture," Gaudelli says. "I think you look smart and I think you look timely if you do it right."

Even when in the stadium, with live action unfolding right in front of them, fans have shown as fervent an interest in their second screens as those fans at home. Part of it is simply staying up to date, whether in monitoring their fantasy teams or other scores or the stats of the game they're attending. Part of it is engaging in "conversation" on Twitter. And part of it is the "look at me" photos they can post on Facebook or the videos on Instagram. One of Super Bowl LI's most viral moments was Gisele Bündchen, the supermodel wife of Patriots quarterback Tom Brady, taking video of herself, up in a box, in the celebratory moment of New England's victory.

To enable all that, the stadium has to have exemplary Wi-Fi capabilities, with a robust system that can handle tens of thousands of concurrent users. And that was absolutely non-negotiable in the planning of U.S. Bank Stadium, says Bryan Harper, the Vikings' vice president of content and production.

There are approximately 1,300 Wi-Fi access points installed throughout the stadium, including inside the handrails of the lower bowl. While a regular-season Vikings game generally sees roughly 30,000 fans using the Wi-Fi, burstable bandwidth means more than double that number can be accommodated on a big event day like Super Bowl LII.

Wi-Fi was just one of the many technological elements Harper advocated for in the early stages of stadium construction, and the Vikings and the Minnesota Sports Facilities Authority believe they've moved the bar technologically in several ways. The video boards are low proximity boards, set at natural sightlines and essentially right within the crowd, ensuring that no fan has to look away from the action to see the screen.

Those boards, with a 16:9 aspect ratio and 13HD technology, provide the highest resolution image possible in a sporting arena. And the cameras shooting the images offer crisp, high-definition replays that Harper says absolutely rival anything someone sees at home.

"We bought the best cameras, paired them with top-notch lenses, and hired the best camera operators we could get," Harper says. "It's what people are drawn to, that imagery.

"When fans are watching a game at home, they're supplementing that viewing experience with statistics or social feeds. We've got to be able to provide that for them as well, and we have to make it easily accessible."

Deitsch believes that "the game is far better on television than it is in person. There are far more angles and far more information. The game is produced so highly now that your sightlines at home are one hundred times better than for fans at the game."

He sees this as an ongoing "real issue" for the NFL, one that's not lost on teams and Super Bowl Host Committees, who have repeatedly addressed improving the gameday experience over the past few years. In Minnesota, Harper believes it's a discrepancy that's been neutralized.

Still, for all the bells, all the flash, and all the fancy ways to dress things up, at its core this is football. People are filing into stadiums and tuning into broadcasts to, as Gaudelli puts it, "watch a game. They're not tuning in to watch a production. They're not tuning in to watch technology. We can't be leaving viewers nonplussed or distracted."

Certainly not. And at Super Bowl LII, just as there will be a place for stories and a place for analysis, and a place for statistics and one for impressions, there will be a place for technology, too.

Where it is, and how big it is, well, we'll soon see.

__Aditi Kinkhabwala__ is a reporter on NFL Network and a writer for NFL.com. She previously covered the NFL and the New York Giants for The Wall Street Journal.

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The Minnesota Vikings' ascension from ne'er-do-well franchise to dominant NFL team began in 1967 with the hiring of a four-time Grey Cup champion coach with prematurely graying hair and a head for the game.

His name was Harold Peter Grant Jr. People called him Bud.

He was the ideal fit for a young team searching for an identity. Though he spent his childhood in Superior, Wis., just across the state line from the storied NFL city of Duluth, Grant grew into manhood in Minnesota. He became a three-sport star at the University of Minnesota, played pro basketball with the Minneapolis Lakers, and then headed north to play and, later, coach in the Canadian Football League.

Jim Finks, the Vikings' general manager, plucked Grant from the Winnipeg Blue Bombers of the CFL when it became clear it was time to replace Norm Van Brocklin, the franchise's coach since it entered the league in 1961.

Grant was a stickler for order and discipline. While players on other teams would appear bored and inattentive during the national anthem, Grant insisted the Vikings stand shoulder-to-shoulder, helmets tucked under their right arm. And one story goes that, while at training camp in Mankato during the 1970s, Grant cut a couple of players because they walked on grass, ignoring the sign that read, "Do not walk on the grass."

Grant doesn't recall releasing anyone, but he does remember the sign and how players reacted to it.

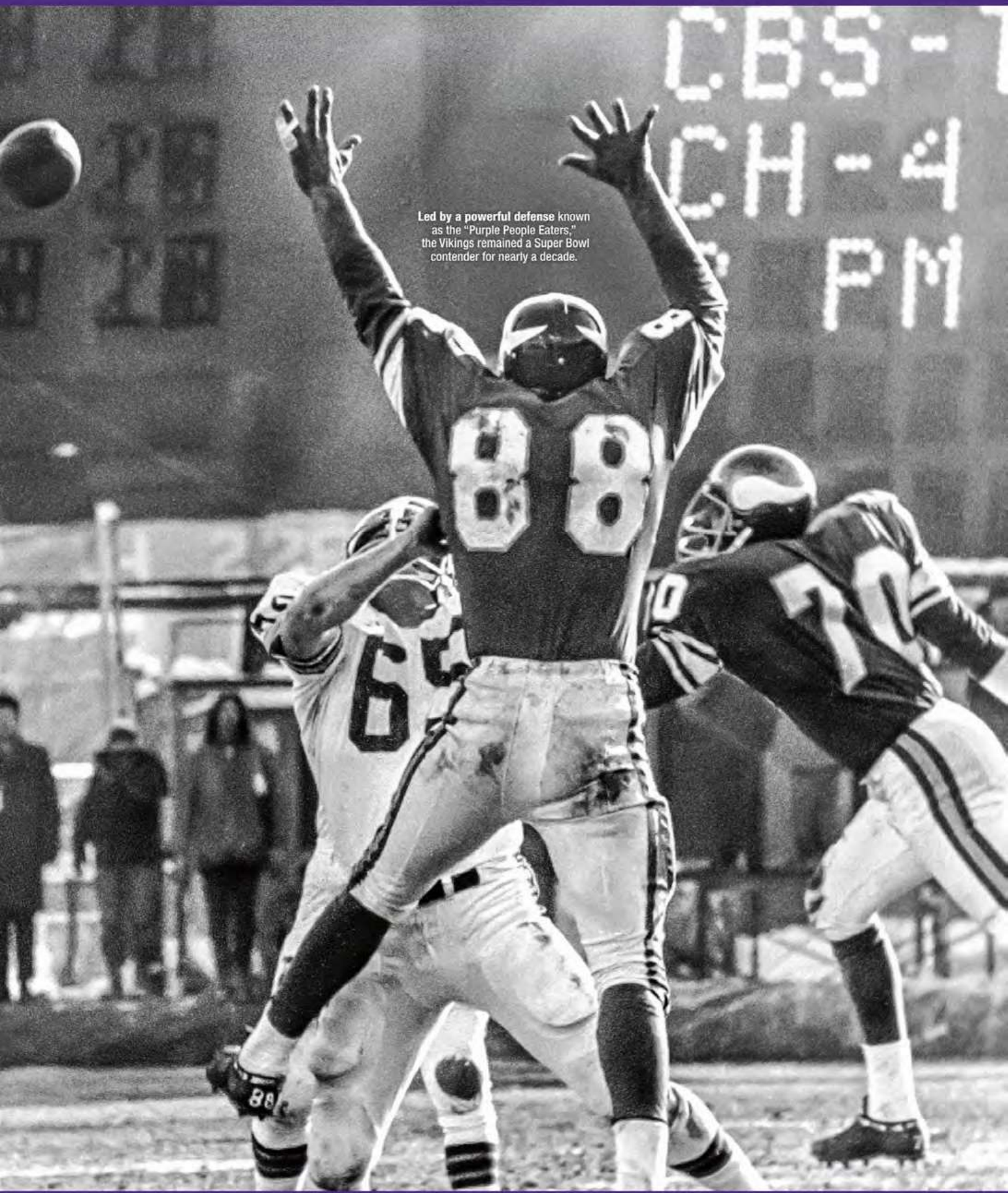
"I watched and saw who walked across the grass," he says. "Got an insight into a player's mentality. Do they ignore directions? It was a little thing to see who paid attention. There are signs in football games, too, like what defense we're in. There are no shortcuts. You evaluate players in a lot of areas. That was one area. Guys who walked across the grass probably ignored signs."

AP Images

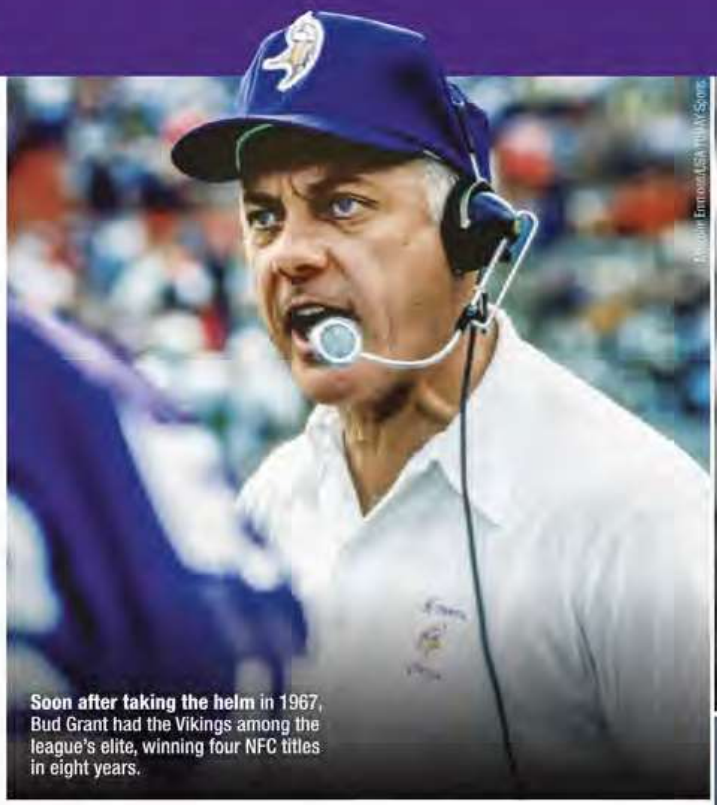
NEAR CONQUERORS

PRO FOOTBALL'S BIGGEST PRIZE MAY HAVE EVADED THEIR GRASP, BUT THE 1970s VIKINGS STILL RULED THE NFC.

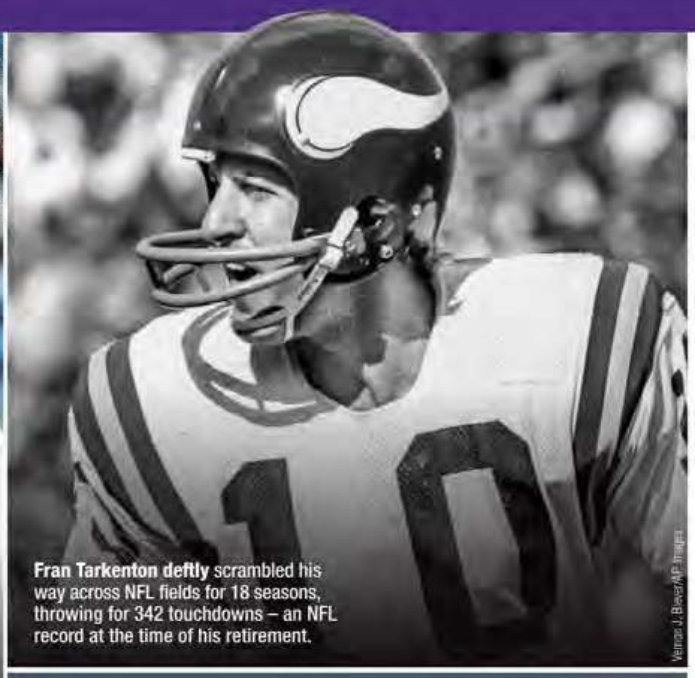
BY JIM KLOBUCHAR AND BOB SANSEVERE



Led by a powerful defense known as the "Purple People Eaters," the Vikings remained a Super Bowl contender for nearly a decade.



Soon after taking the helm in 1967, Bud Grant had the Vikings among the league's elite, winning four NFC titles in eight years.



Fran Tarkenton deftly scrambled his way across NFL fields for 18 seasons, throwing for 342 touchdowns – an NFL record at the time of his retirement.

Under Grant, the Vikings captured 11 division titles in his first 14 seasons as coach, won 10 or more games seven times, and reached four Super Bowls. They lost all of them – Super Bowls IV, VIII, IX, and XI.

The Vikings of 1969 and most of the 1970s were exceptional – just not exceptional enough to overcome the Kansas City Chiefs, Miami Dolphins, Pittsburgh Steelers, and Oakland Raiders when they crossed paths on Super Bowl Sunday.

"You've got to have a short memory if you want to be a coach," Grant says. "And remember, it's only entertainment. It's not life or death. Of course, it bothers you when you lose a game, but you can't go in a hole. It can't bother you forever."

It still bothers some.

Fran Tarkenton knows what it's like to have fame, to have wealth, to have a bust of himself in the Pro Football Hall of Fame. What he doesn't know is what it's like to be a Super Bowl champion. He went 0-and-3 in Super Bowls with the Vikings. And it still gnaws at him.

"I think about it just about every day," Tarkenton admits. "It tainted our franchise. We had the tag on us that we didn't win a Super Bowl game. The yoke's around our neck and it's one of the greatest disappointments of my life. I never forget the feeling that we weren't able to win those games."

Tarkenton is convinced the Vikings should have gone to five Super Bowls with him at quarterback, but the infamous "Hail Mary" playoff loss to the Cowboys in 1975 and a broken leg he suffered in a 1977 regular-season game short-circuited those teams.

"Maybe the best team we ever had was when we played the Cowboys in the Hail Mary game," Tarkenton says of the squad that went 12-2 and faced Dallas in the NFC Divisional Playoffs. "We snatched defeat out of the jaws of victory. Or, Roger Staubach did it for us."

Staubach and Drew Pearson did it. And, according to many Vikings fans, there was that official who should have thrown a flag against Pearson for pushing off defensive back Nate Wright with 32 seconds left in the

KLOBUCHAR OPINES ON THE VIKES

Jim Klobuchar is a retired columnist with the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* who covered the Vikings from their inception, giving his readers up close and entertaining insights into the team and its players through their four Super Bowl appearances.

An award-winning journalist, Klobuchar wrote seven books about the Vikings. Here is Jim on those great Vikings teams …

On what made Hall of Fame coach Bud Grant successful: "He had the respect of the players. He wasn't smarter than other coaches. There were a lot of smart coaches, but he was smart enough. And he was tough. If a player challenged him, he was gone. There weren't any rebellions on his team. If you played for him, you played all out the whole game."

On the difference between Grant and his predecessor as coach, Norm Van Brocklin: "Bud was much calmer. Players knew Van Brocklin knew football, but he didn't have a lot of friends in the locker room. I once got into a fight with Van Brocklin. We were rolling around on the floor in a hotel room and broke the TV into a million pieces. That would never happen with Bud. Do you know what Bud did after team meals? He swept up all the food that was left and brought it home to his dogs."

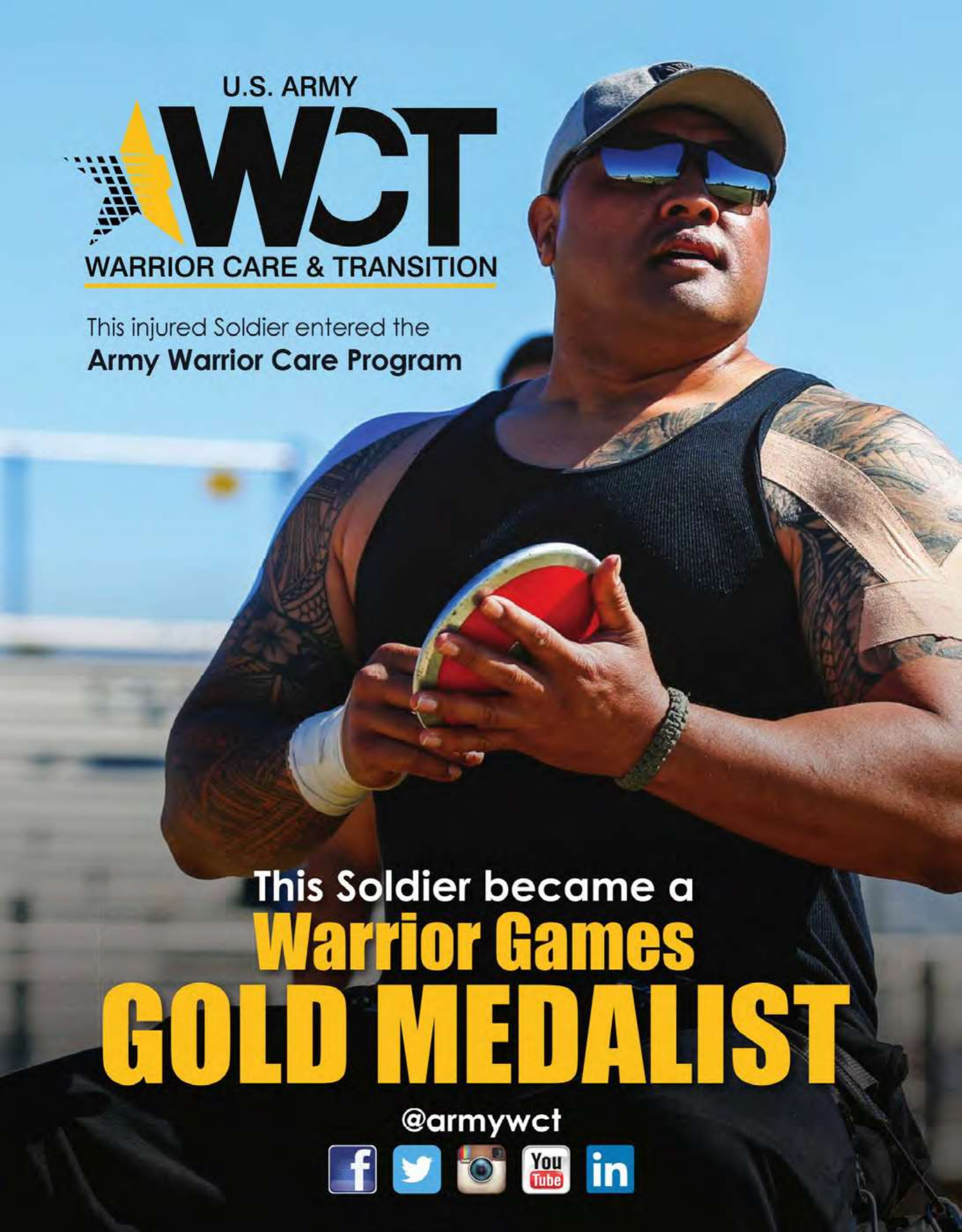
On Hall of Fame quarterback Fran Tarkenton, who helped the Vikings reach three Super Bowls: "A lot of people don't realize how tough a guy Fran was. Even when he was hurt in a game, he would never limp off the field. He didn't want the other team to know. He was a tough guy, and Fran was a bright guy. He was smarter than any of them. And he could be funny, too. One time, he was talking to a Boy Scout troop. One of the kids asked what Fran would think about when big guys from the other team were running after him. He said, 'I'd be thinking about what would happen if they caught up to me.' He'd call me on Monday nights. He just wanted to talk to a guy about the games."

On Joe Kapp, the Vikings' quarterback in their first Super Bowl: "The players loved him. Probably not as light on his feet as Tarkenton, but he was a tough guy. He didn't have the techniques a lot of great quarterbacks have, but he had a will to win."

On Hall of Fame defensive tackle Alan Page, who played in all four of the Vikings' Super Bowls: "He is the best football player I ever saw. A smart guy. A tough guy. The record will show that every time an official said he was offsides, the official was wrong. Alan was smart and fast."

On the Purple People Eaters nickname: "I didn't invent it, but I used it as quickly as anyone."

On why the Vikings failed to win a Super Bowl: "The teams they played were better."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fourth quarter and the Cowboys trailing, 14-10. But there was no flag and, instead, Pearson strolled into the end zone with the game-winning 50-yard touchdown reception.

"It's something that was out of our hands and in the hands of the Almighty," Tarkenton says. "Then, in 1977, after I broke my leg and couldn't play, we lost to the Cowboys in the playoffs again. You don't win many playoff games with a backup quarterback. As great a dynasty as we had, we could have had two more Super Bowls."

The Vikings were the best team not to win a Super Bowl in the 1970s. The memories last, both good and bad. And that nickname of theirs has lasted, too.

They were the Purple People Eaters, a moniker hijacked from a 1958 Sheb Wooley song. It was the perfect synergy of team and nickname, blending the franchise's dominant color with the defense's appetite for devouring offenses during the regular season and in many postseason games that didn't have Roman numerals attached to them.

Four decades after their final Super Bowl, the mention of the Purple People Eaters evokes remembrances of a rugged team that was in its icy element late in the season, winning games on a tundra known as Metropolitan Stadium with many of the players wearing short sleeves in frigid temperatures. Grant offered a snapshot of those days when, for the coin flip prior to a 2016 playoff game against the Seattle Seahawks, he walked out to the field in sub-zero temperatures wearing only a short sleeve shirt.

"You make the most of what you've got. You played in cold weather," Grant says. "We didn't make a big thing of it. We just ignored it. Football is played in all kinds of weather. You have to be ready for it."

The defense had three Pro Football Hall of Fame players – defensive end Carl Eller, defensive tackle Alan Page, and safety Paul Krause – and a fourth, defensive end Jim Marshall, who Grant and most anyone affiliated with the team considers among the best ever to play the game.

The defensive core remained intact during the Super Bowl years. It was different on offense. Quarterback Joe Kapp, like Grant, came down from the CFL with a rough and gutsy style that helped the 1969 Vikings go 12-2 during the regular season, win the final NFL championship before the merger with the AFL, and land in Super Bowl IV, where a plucky Chiefs team beat them, 23-7.

Kapp wasn't a prototypical quarterback and, though he once threw for seven touchdowns in a game, he wasn't a polished passer. But he had what Grant wanted.

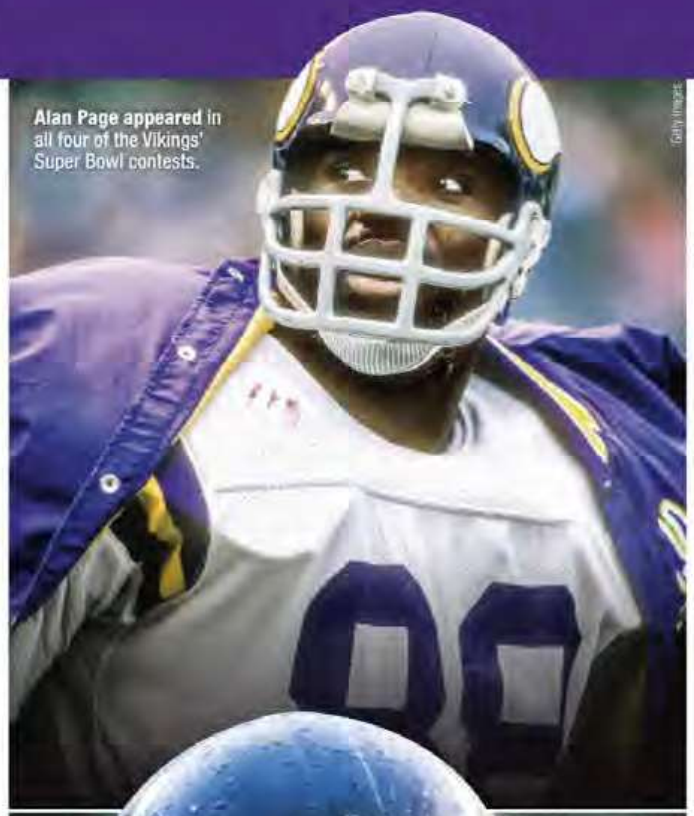
So did Tarkenton.

"Both were terrific quarterbacks," Grant says.

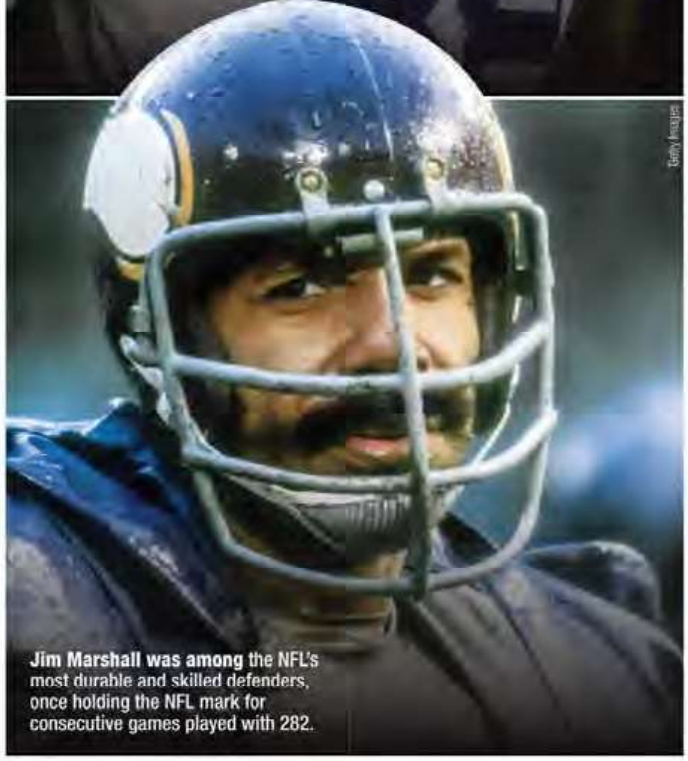
Tarkenton, who as a rookie came off the bench to lead the Vikings to a win in their first-ever game in 1961, was traded to the New York Giants after the 1966 season. Finks and Grant wanted him back, and his return to Minnesota in 1972 helped lift the Vikings to three more Super Bowls.

The scrambling, chains-moving signal-caller was complemented by a whirling, ahead-of-his-time running back in Chuck Foreman and an offensive line anchored by two future Hall of Famers: right tackle Ron Yary and center Mick Tingelhoff.

"Bud figured out how to build a football team. I figured out how to play quarterback at 6-feet tall and 185 pounds," Tarkenton says. "You can't win without great players. We had great players on both sides of the ball."



Alan Page appeared in all four of the Vikings' Super Bowl contests.



Jim Marshall was among the NFL's most durable and skilled defenders, once holding the NFL mark for consecutive games played with 282.

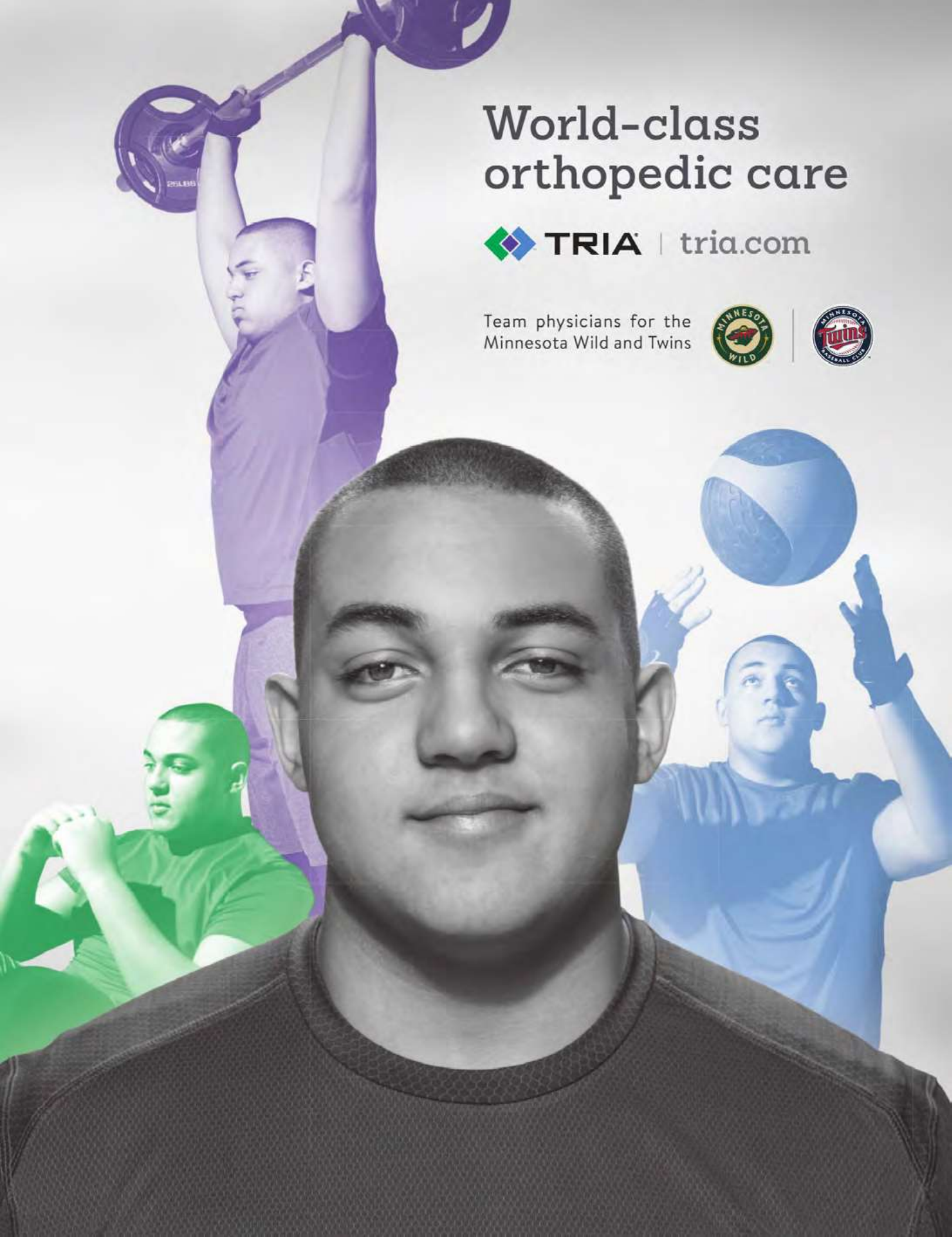
Perhaps as a way to rationalize the Super Bowl losses, both Grant and Tarkenton will tell you the NFL doesn't have a best-of-seven series like in the NBA, the NHL, and Major League Baseball.

It's just one game, one spectacle on a Sunday in February.

"It's sudden death," Tarkenton says. "It's 60 minutes and it's over."

The games end. The memories don't.

***Jim Klobuchar**, author of more than 20 books, including seven about the Vikings, covered the franchise as an award-winning columnist with the* Minneapolis Star Tribune *from their inception through their Super Bowl years.*
***Bob Sansevere** was the* Star Tribune's *Vikings beat writer from 1984-89, and, since the 1990 season, has written about the team as a columnist with the* St. Paul Pioneer Press. *He also has been a member of the KQRS Morning Show for three decades and does a daily podcast called The BS Show.*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REMEMBERING DAN ROONEY (1932-2017)

THE ARCHITECT OF THE STEELERS BUILT AN ORGANIZATION THAT PRODUCED SIX SUPER BOWL CHAMPIONSHIPS AND EARNED RESPECT ACROSS THE LEAGUE. BY ED BOUCHETTE

The iconic image resonates in Pittsburgh like few others: the day Pete Rozelle handed the Lombardi Trophy to Art Rooney Sr. after the Steelers won Super Bowl IX.

The Chief, as he was affectionately known, finally had a championship – in his 42nd year as owner of the Steelers. A sorry outfit for most of its NFL existence, the franchise's first NFL title belonged to the venerable leader and Pro Football Hall of Famer.

Yet the man who truly laid the groundwork for the Steelers' first Super Bowl crown – and the many that would follow – stayed in the background that January evening in 1975. Dan Rooney knew the day belonged to his dad; everyone else knew the budding Steelers dynasty came courtesy of the Chief's eldest son.

"I think he felt my grandfather put in a lot of tough years and stuck with it through thick and thin, mostly thin," says current Steelers President Art Rooney II, Dan's first born. "He wanted him to have his day and enjoy it. It was just great to see [my grandfather] finally stand on that podium, that's for sure."

Indeed.

"Pete often said that handing the Chief the Lombardi Trophy … was the highlight of his career as Commissioner," Dan Rooney wrote in his 2007 autobiography. "My father wanted me to accept it, but I said, 'No, this is yours, Dad.' And it was his. He had founded the team, kept it in Pittsburgh, stuck it out through the lean times. He was the beloved Chief. He was the legend."

Dan Rooney, though, was the architect of the new Steelers, an organization that would deliver four Lombardi Trophies in six years, a record six overall, and turned nearly 40 years of losing into the next 40 of unprecedented competitiveness in the NFL's Super Bowl era.

"He's the reason they had all the success from the late '60s all the way through now," says Joe Gordon, who joined the Steelers as their public relations director in 1969 and worked for the team into the 21st century. "He built the nucleus of the Steelers."

Dan not only hired head coach Chuck Noll, he restructured the franchise from top to bottom. Starting as a ball boy in the 1930s, he went to work for the team in the 1950s while still a college student at Duquesne, where he earned a degree in accounting, and knew every aspect of the business by the time his father unofficially ceded much of his control to him.

If Art Rooney Sr. was the face of the Steelers until his death in 1988, his eldest son was their backbone. Both are in the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton.

Few owners, if any, contributed to the NFL as did Rooney, and not just because the uplifting Rooney Rule was named after him. He chaired so many league committees – executive committee, expansion, properties, labor, Hall of Fame, etc. – that it was appropriate that his last official title was chairman of the Steelers. He attended his 50th Super Bowl last February, having missed just one during his lifetime (after being injured in a car accident in the early 1980s).

"I don't think there are any figures more important than Dan Rooney over the years," NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said after Rooney passed away last April 13 at age 84. "His influence on the game is reflected in his Hall of Fame election, and he stands tall among [all enshrinees]. He took on very difficult challenges, especially during difficult periods in labor relations; he was a trusted and an important figure during that time."

Winning six Super Bowls in eight trips also is a part of Rooney's legacy. And while the Steelers did it with three different coaches, they were the only three he ever hired: Noll for 23 years, Bill Cowher for 15, and Mike Tomlin for the past 11.

Rooney had the knowledge and the patience to stick with good coaches and tune out the cries to "do something" when things were not going well, notably the consecutive losing seasons under Bill Cowher in 1998 and 1999.

"He said to me – at the Super Bowl in Atlanta when Coach Cowher came under a lot of heat from the press – that the Steelers didn't

AP Images

David J. Phillip/AP Images

Dan Rooney spent his life as a Steeler, from the days with his father, Art, (shown left during the 1970 NFL Draft), to being part of six Super Bowl winners, including the Super Bowl XL crown when he received the Lombardi Trophy from NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue (bottom left).

have a good year that year," Mean Joe Greene remembers. "He said that the game of football has its ebbs and flows. When a team has a bad year, it's not always the head coach's fault. Sometimes that's just how football is.

"Shortly thereafter, I read in the paper that he gave Coach Cowher a new contract and all the news about firing [him] ceased."

Cowher says one of the most rewarding moments in his career was handing the Lombardi Trophy to Rooney after the Steelers won Super Bowl XL. It was their fifth title, the first without Art Rooney Sr., and 26 years since they earned No. 4.

Three years later, with a new coach and Dan Rooney soon to be named U.S. Ambassador to Ireland, a sixth Lombardi arrived.

"When you get a chance to watch how hard it is to win, it's pretty special when it comes together," Art Rooney II said.

Dan might not have envisioned six Super Bowls when he took control of the Steelers a half-century ago, but he had a plan.

"There was no doubt in his mind we were going to win a championship," Gordon says. "That was his total focus. Everything he did was designed to [achieve that goal]."

He did not stop with one, leaving a legacy in Pittsburgh and throughout the NFL.

***Ed Bouchette** has covered the Steelers for the* Pittsburgh Post-Gazette *since 1985.*

George Gojkovich/Getty Images

SUPER BOWL RECORDS

GAMES

Most Games
7 – Tom Brady, New England, XXXVI, XXXVIII, XXXIX, XLII, XLVI, XLIX, LI

Most Games, Winning Team
5 – Charles Haley, San Francisco, XXIII, XXIV; Dallas, XXVII, XXVIII, XXX;
Tom Brady, New England, XXXVI, XXXVIII, XXXIX, XLIX, LI

Most Games, Coach
7 – Bill Belichick, New England, XXXVI, XXXVIII, XXXIX, XLII, XLVI, XLIX, LI

Most Games, Winning Team, Coach
5 – Bill Belichick, New England, XXXVI, XXXVIII, XXXIX, XLIX, LI

SCORING

Most Points, Career
48 – Jerry Rice, San Francisco-Oakland, 4 games (8 TD)

Most Points, Game
20 – James White, New England vs. Atlanta, LI (3 TD, 1 2-PAT)

Most Touchdowns, Career
8 – Jerry Rice, San Francisco-Oakland, 4 games

Most Touchdowns, Game
3 – Roger Craig, San Francisco vs. Miami, XIX;
Jerry Rice, San Francisco vs. Denver, XXIV; vs. San Diego, XXIX;
Ricky Watters, San Francisco vs. San Diego, XXIX;
Terrell Davis, Denver vs. Green Bay, XXXII;
James White, New England vs. Atlanta, LI

Most PATs (Kicking), Career
13 – Adam Vinatieri, New England-Indianapolis, 5 games

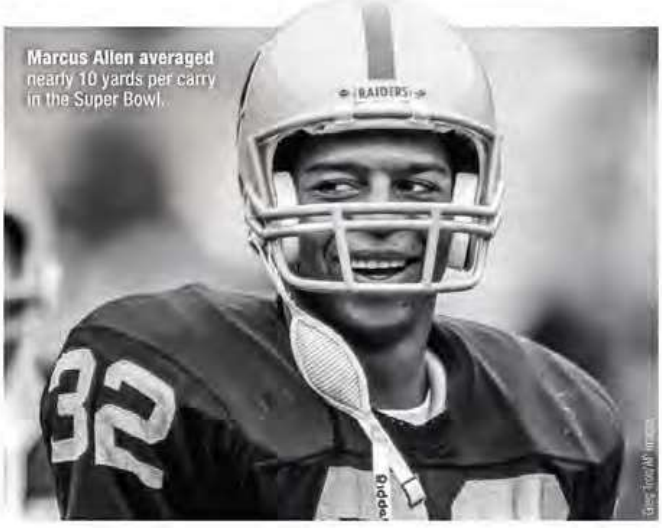
Most PATs (Kicking), Game
7 – Mike Cofer, San Francisco vs. Denver, XXIV;
Lin Elliott, Dallas vs. Buffalo, XXVII;
Doug Brien, San Francisco vs. San Diego, XXIX

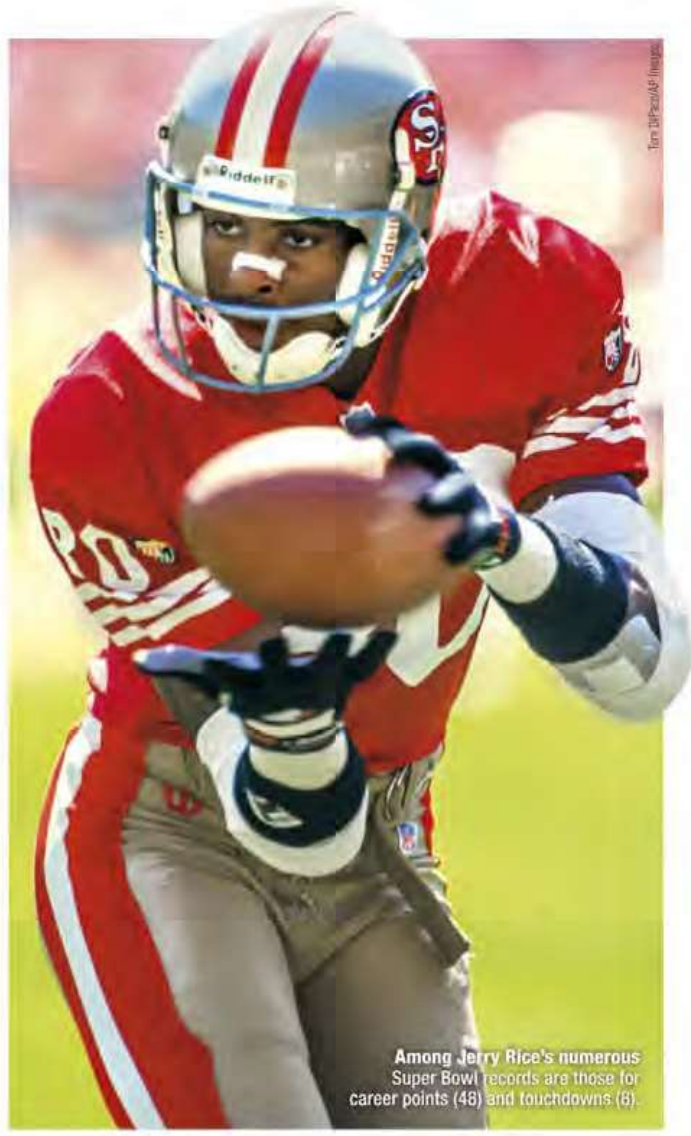
Most Two-Point Conversions, Game
1 – by 10 players, most recently by
James White & Danny Amendola, New England vs. Atlanta, LI

Most Field Goals, Career
7 – Adam Vinatieri, New England-Indianapolis, 5 games (10 attempts)

Most Field Goals, Game
4 – Don Chandler, Green Bay vs. Oakland, II;
Ray Wersching, San Francisco vs. Cincinnati, XVI

Longest Field Goal
54 – Steve Christie, Buffalo vs. Dallas, XXVIII


Marcus Allen averaged nearly 10 yards per carry in the Super Bowl.


Among Jerry Rice's numerous Super Bowl records are those for career points (48) and touchdowns (8).

RUSHING

Most Attempts, Career
101 – Franco Harris, Pittsburgh, 4 games

Most Attempts, Game
38 – John Riggins, Washington vs. Miami, XVII

Most Yards Gained, Career
354 – Franco Harris, Pittsburgh, 4 games

Most Yards Gained, Game
204 – Timmy Smith, Washington vs. Denver, XXII

Longest Run From Scrimmage
75 – Willie Parker, Pittsburgh vs. Seattle, XL (TD)

Highest Average Gain, Career (20 attempts)
9.6 – Marcus Allen, L.A. Raiders, 1 game (20-191)

Highest Average Gain, Game (10 attempts)
10.5 – Tom Matte, Baltimore vs. N.Y. Jets, III (11-116)

Most Touchdowns, Career
5 – Emmitt Smith, Dallas, 3 games

Most Touchdowns, Game
3 – Terrell Davis, Denver vs. Green Bay, XXXII

PASSING

Highest Passer Rating, Career (40 attempts)
127.8 – Joe Montana, San Francisco, 4 games

Most Passes Attempted, Career
309 – Tom Brady, New England, 7 games

Most Passes Attempted, Game
62 – Tom Brady, New England vs. Atlanta, LI

Most Passes Completed, Career
207 – Tom Brady, New England, 7 games

Most Passes Completed, Game
43 – Tom Brady, New England vs. Atlanta, LI

Most Consecutive Completions, Game
16 – Tom Brady, New England vs. N.Y. Giants, XLVI

Highest Completion Percentage, Career (40 attempts)
70.0 – Troy Aikman, Dallas, 3 games, (56-80)

Highest Completion Percentage, Game (20 attempts)
88.0 – Phil Simms, N.Y. Giants vs. Denver, XXI (22-25)

Most Yards Gained, Career
2,071 – Tom Brady, New England, 7 games

Most Yards Gained, Game
466 – Tom Brady, New England vs. Atlanta, LI

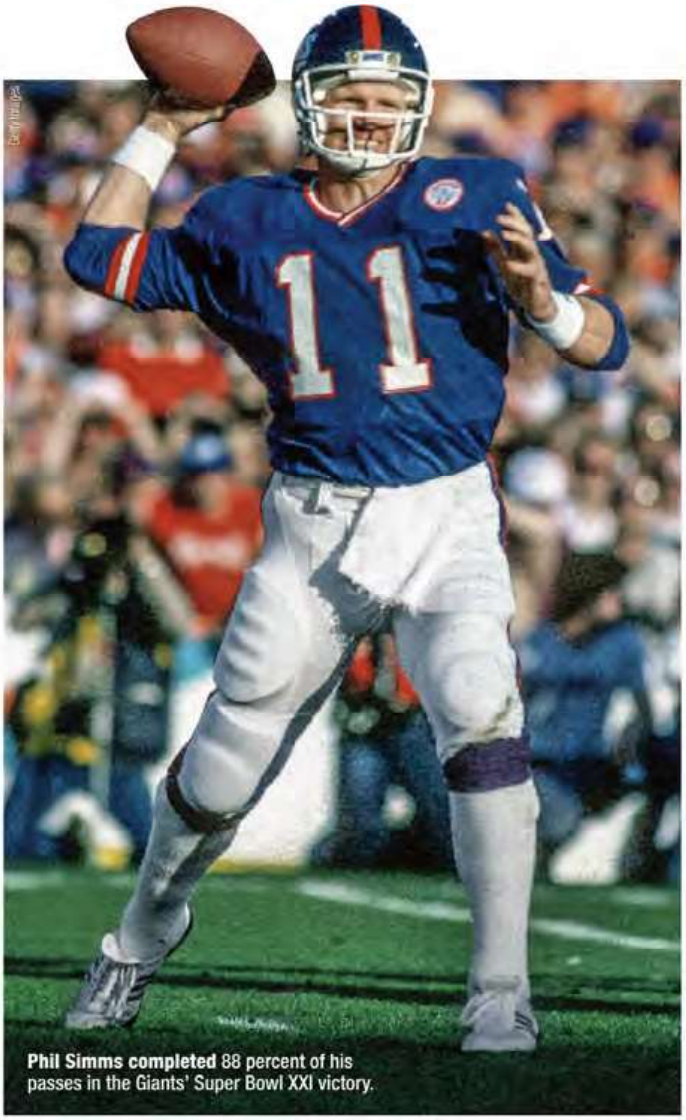
Longest Pass Completion
85 – Jake Delhomme (to Muhsin Muhammad), Carolina vs. New England, XXXVIII (TD)

Most Touchdown Passes, Career
15 – Tom Brady, New England, 7 games

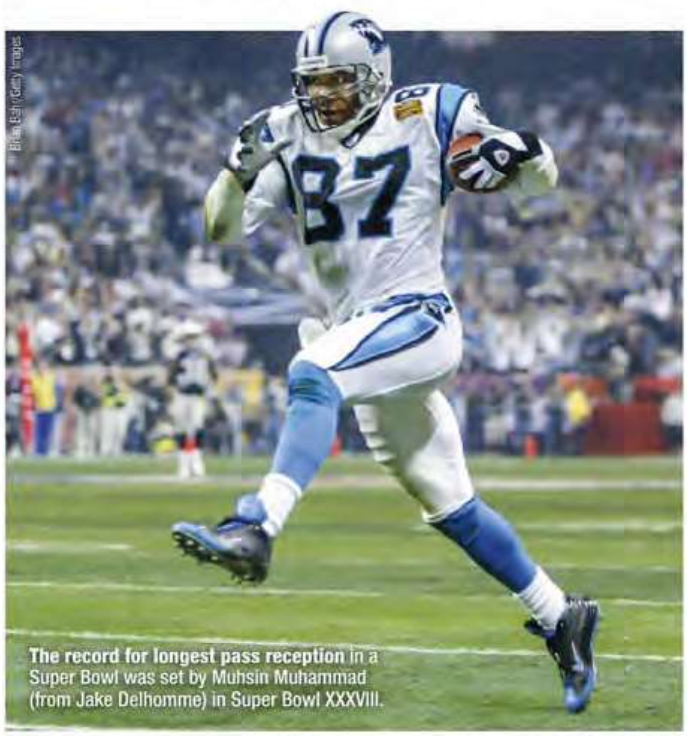
Most Touchdown Passes, Game
6 – Steve Young, San Francisco vs. San Diego, XXIX

Most Passes Without an Interception, Game
48 – Tom Brady, New England vs. N.Y. Giants, XLII

Lowest Percentage of Passes Intercepted, Career (40 attempts)
0.0 – Joe Montana, San Francisco, 4 games (122 passes, 0 interceptions); Jim Plunkett, Oakland/L.A. Raiders, 2 games (46 passes, 0 interceptions)



Phil Simms completed 88 percent of his passes in the Giants' Super Bowl XXI victory.



The record for longest pass reception in a Super Bowl was set by Muhsin Muhammad (from Jake Delhomme) in Super Bowl XXXVIII.

RECEIVING

Most Receptions, Career
33 – Jerry Rice, San Francisco-Oakland, 4 games

Most Receptions, Game
14 – James White, New England vs. Atlanta, LI

Most Yards Gained, Career
589 – Jerry Rice, San Francisco-Oakland, 4 games

Most Yards Gained, Game
215 – Jerry Rice, San Francisco vs. Cincinnati, XXIII

Longest Reception
85 – Muhsin Muhammad (from Jake Delhomme), Carolina vs. New England, XXXVIII (TD)

Highest Average Gain, Career (8 receptions)
24.4 – John Stallworth, Pittsburgh, 4 games (11-268)

Highest Average Gain, Game (3 receptions)
40.33 – John Stallworth, Pittsburgh vs. Los Angeles Rams, XIV (3-121)

Most Touchdowns, Career
8 – Jerry Rice, San Francisco-Oakland, 4 games

Most Touchdowns, Game
3 – Jerry Rice, San Francisco vs. Denver, XXIV; vs. San Diego, XXIX

SUPER BOWL RECORDS

KICKOFF RETURNS

Most Kickoff Returns, Career
10 – Ken Bell, Denver, 3 games

Most Kickoff Returns, Game
8 – Andre Coleman, San Diego vs. San Francisco, XXIX;
Marcus Knight, Oakland vs. Tampa Bay, XXXVII

Most Yards Gained, Career
283 – Fulton Walker, Miami, 2 games

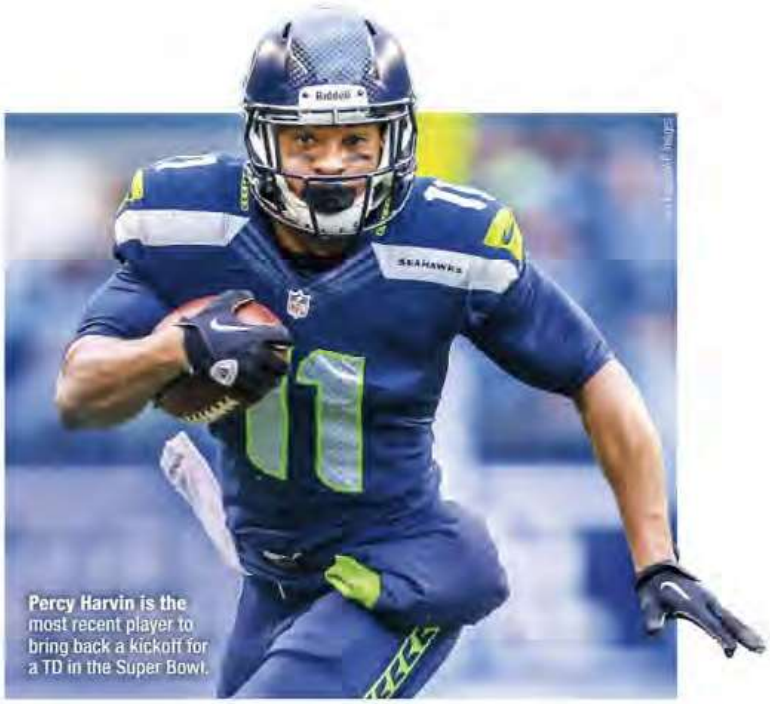
Most Yards Gained, Game
244 – Andre Coleman, San Diego vs. San Francisco, XXIX

Longest Return
108 – Jacoby Jones, Baltimore vs. San Francisco, XLVII (TD)

Highest Average, Career (4 returns)
42.0 – Tim Dwight, Atlanta, 1 game (5-210)

Highest Average, Game (3 returns)
47.5 – Fulton Walker, Miami vs. Washington, XVII (4-190)

Most Touchdowns, Game
1 – by 10 players, most recently by Percy Harvin (87 yards), Seattle vs. Denver, XLVIII


Percy Harvin is the most recent player to bring back a kickoff for a TD in the Super Bowl.

PUNT RETURNS

Most Punt Returns, Career
8 – Troy Brown, New England, 3 games

Most Punt Returns, Game
6 – Mike Nelms, Washington vs. Miami, XVII;
Desmond Howard, Green Bay vs. New England, XXXI

Most Yards Gained, Career
94 – John Taylor, San Francisco, 3 games

Most Yards Gained, Game
90 – Desmond Howard, Green Bay vs. New England, XXXI

Longest Return
61 – Jordan Norwood, Denver vs. Carolina, 50

Highest Average, Career (4 returns)
15.7 – John Taylor, San Francisco, 3 games (6-94)

Highest Average, Game (3 returns)
18.7 – John Taylor, San Francisco vs. Cincinnati, XXIII (3-56)

Most Touchdowns, Game
None

Larry Brown is among the players with three career interceptions in the Super Bowl.

PUNTING

Most Punts, Career
17 – Mike Eischeid, Oakland-Minnesota, 3 games;
Mike Horan, Denver-St. Louis, 4 games

Most Punts, Game
11 – Brad Maynard, N.Y. Giants vs. Baltimore, XXXV

Longest Punt
64 – Ryan Allen, New England vs. Seattle, XLIX

Highest Average, Punting, Career (10 punts)
46.5 – Jerrel Wilson, Kansas City, 2 games (11-511)

Highest Average, Punting, Game (4 punts)
50.2 – Tom Rouen, Seattle vs. Pittsburgh, XL (6-301)

INTERCEPTIONS

Most Interceptions, Career
3 – Chuck Howley, Dallas, 2 games;
Rod Martin, Oakland-L.A. Raiders, 2 games;
Larry Brown, Dallas, 3 games

Most Interceptions, Game
3 – Rod Martin, Oakland vs. Philadelphia, XV

Most Yards Gained, Career
108 – Darrien Gordon, San Diego-Denver-Oakland, 4 games

Most Yards Gained, Game
108 – Darrien Gordon, Denver vs. Atlanta, XXXIII

Longest Return
100 – James Harrison, Pittsburgh vs. Arizona, XLIII (TD)

Most Touchdowns, Game
2 – Dwight Smith, Tampa Bay vs. Oakland, XXXVII

SACKS

Most Sacks, Career (since 1982)
4.5 – Charles Haley, San Francisco-Dallas, 5 games

Most Sacks, Game (since 1982)
3.0 – Reggie White, Green Bay vs. New England, XXXI;
Darnell Dockett, Arizona vs. Pittsburgh, XLIII;
Kony Ealy, Carolina vs. Denver, 50;
Grady Jarrett, Atlanta vs. New England, LI

NFL

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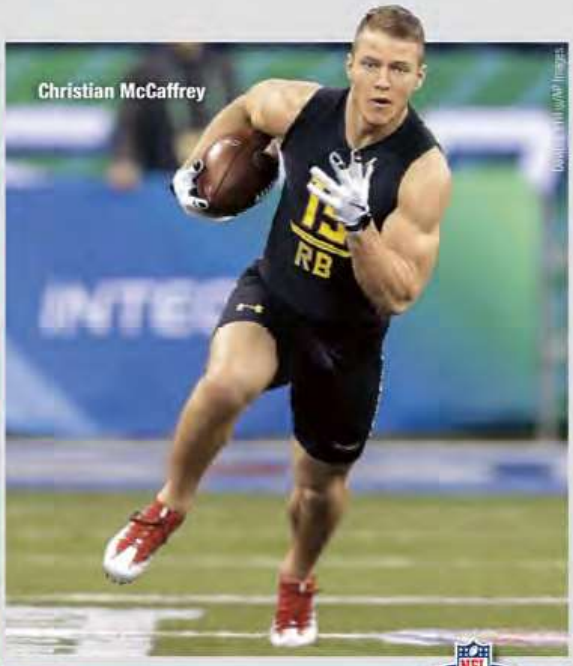
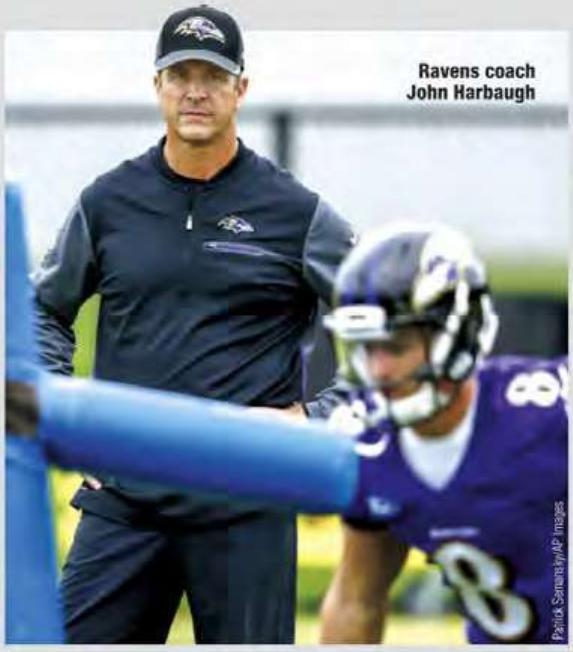

Christian McCaffrey


Ravens coach John Harbaugh

FEB. 27-MARCH 5

NFL SCOUTING COMBINE

nfl.com/combine

The NFL Scouting Combine is a big step on the path to the draft, bringing together more than 300 pro prospects to Indianapolis' Lucas Oil Stadium. NFL Network will be on hand for it all, delivering exclusive live coverage each day with player workouts, expert analysis, and interviews with participants, coaches, and team officials.

MID-JULY

TRAINING CAMP

nfl.com/trainingcamp

Training camp is where it all starts for the NFL's 32 teams as they pursue a Super Bowl title. As camps unfold and teams narrow down to their 53-man rosters, NFL.com and NFL Network will have complete coverage with depth charts, preseason schedules, and analysis and insights from visits to camps around the league.

APRIL 26-28

NFL DRAFT

nfl.com/draft

Find out where the stars of tomorrow will be playing when the 83rd annual NFL Draft takes place at Dallas' AT&T Stadium. NFL Network and ESPN/ESPN2 are televising the three-day event live, with Rounds 1-3 in primetime on Thursday (April 26) and Friday (April 27). Last year, the Cleveland Browns selected Texas A&M defensive end Myles Garrett with the No. 1 overall pick.

2018 NFL DRAFT ORDER

1. Cleveland Browns
2. New York Giants
3. Indianapolis Colts
4. Cleveland Browns (from Houston Texans)
5. Denver Broncos
6. New York Jets
7. Tampa Bay Buccaneers
8. Chicago Bears
9. Oakland Raiders^
9. San Francisco 49ers^
11. Miami Dolphins
12. Cincinnati Bengals
13. Washington Redskins
14. Green Bay Packers
15. Arizona Cardinals
16. Baltimore Ravens
17. Los Angeles Chargers
18. Seattle Seahawks
19. Dallas Cowboys
20. Detroit Lions
21. Buffalo Bills
22. Buffalo Bills (from K.C. Chiefs)
23. Los Angeles Rams
24. Carolina Panthers
25. Tennessee Titans
26. Atlanta Falcons
27. New Orleans Saints
28. Pittsburgh Steelers
29. Jacksonville Jaguars*
30. Philadelphia Eagles*
31. New England Patriots*
32. Minnesota Vikings"

*^Order determined by coin filp *Order determined by playoff finish*

Myles Garrett

Logan Bowles/AP Images

AUG. 2-5

PFHOF ENSHRINEMENT WEEK

ProFootballHOF.com/tickets

Honor the Heroes of the Game at the 2018 Pro Football Hall of Fame Enshrinement Week Powered by Johnson Controls in Canton, Ohio. This year's class will be announced on the eve of Super Bowl LII. Tickets and VIP Packages are on sale for the Enshrinement Ceremony, Hall of Fame Game, and Concert for Legends at Tom Benson Hall of Fame Stadium. Call 844-4HOFTIX for more information.

Gregory Bull/AP Images

OCT. 14, 21 & 28

LONDON SERIES

nfl.com

The NFL will hold three regular-season contests in the UK in 2018, highlighted by three teams playing in London for the first time. The schedule has the Raiders meeting the Seahawks Oct. 14 at the new Tottenham Hotspur stadium, and games between the Eagles-Jaguars and Titans-Chargers on Oct. 21 and Oct. 28 at Wembley Stadium. The order of the two games at Wembley will be confirmed at a later date.

Natasha Moustache/Getty Images

Guster

SEPT. 6

NFL KICKOFF

nfl.com/kickoff

The NFL's 99th season gets underway Thursday, Sept. 6, with a spectacular day-long celebration at the home of the defending Super Bowl champion. It's all part of *NFL Kickoff Driven By Hyundai*, which in 2017 saw fan-friendly events and musical performances, including one by Guster, prior to the Patriots' banner-raising ceremony and game against the Kansas City Chiefs at Gillette Stadium.

Peter Read Miller/AP Images

FEB. 3, 2019

SUPER BOWL LIII

nfl.com/superbowl

Pro football's biggest game is headed to Atlanta and the spectacular new Mercedes-Benz Stadium. Super Bowl LIII is set for Sunday, Feb. 3, and will be televised by CBS. To be entered in a random drawing for tickets, send your request (limit one per household) by June 1 with name, address, city, state, ZIP, phone, and email to: Super Bowl Random Drawing, P.O. Box 49140, Strongsville, OH 44149-0140.

Eternal Stars, Forever Friends

BY CRAIG PETERS

Bud Grant

Sid Hartman

Top left: Bud Grant (left) stands with his presenter, Sid Hartman, at Grant's 1994 Pro Football Hall of Fame enshrinement. **Top right:** Hartman (left) and Grant attend a 2014 ceremony for Bud Grant Way outside of U.S. Bank Stadium.

BUD GRANT AND SID HARTMAN ARE INTERTWINED with the Super Bowl, all the way from its speculative days to the spectacular stage it now occupies as the game returns to Minnesota for the first time in 26 years.

And while the two North Star State legends have been commended for their many accomplishments — Grant as the iconic coach of the Vikings and Hartman as a legendary sports journalist with the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* — they are more proud of their 74-year friendship. Yeah, 74 years.

They first met in 1944 when Grant visited the Twin Cities as a member of the basketball team from Naval Station Great Lakes and Hartman was an intrepid reporter. Grant eventually played basketball, football, and baseball for the University of Minnesota, and their one-of-a-kind kinship blossomed over spaghetti dinners.

"Sid became a good friend, but [I was] not a good source," says Grant, who attended college on a prorated GI Bill. "I was not a conduit to what was going on, and to this day, if you ask me, 'What is Sid's greatest quality?' it's his integrity. He wanted nothing from me. Just friendship."

Hartman influenced the Minneapolis Lakers' decision to sign Grant as the NBA's first hardship case. After two seasons with the Lakers – which included being part of their 1949-50 championship team – Grant moved on to pro football with the Philadelphia Eagles and then joined the CFL's Winnipeg Blue Bombers.

He became Winnipeg's head coach at age 29. Ten highly successful seasons followed, during which time Grant won four Grey Cup championships and turned down an initial offer from the expansion Vikings.

Grant accepted the team's second offer, in 1967, and coached the Vikings for 18 seasons, winning 11 division titles and the 1969 NFL Championship, and earning berths in Super Bowls IV, VIII, IX, and XI.

Hartman and Grant maintained professionalism and their friendship during the coach's tenure with the Vikings.

"I didn't treat him better than anybody else. He knew I had my job," Hartman says. "Some of those writers were a little envious of me. They thought I was getting all of the stories, and one of them asked Bud, 'What do you think of Sid Hartman as a writer?' He said, 'I tell you what, I trust him with my life.' That shut them off."

The Vikings' first trip to the Super Bowl came after the 1969 season, when they faced the Chiefs at Tulane Stadium in the final game before the AFL/NFL merger.

"One game, that's what makes the Super Bowl so great," Grant says. "If we had played them two out of three – or three out of five – it might have been different, but it was one game, and they made a couple of strategic moves, and we made a couple of mistakes.

"They won. If you can't stand to lose, you're in the wrong business."

When the Vikings reached Super Bowl VIII in Houston, 400 media members covered the event. By Super Bowl XI, that number had mushroomed to 2,000 in the Los Angeles area, where Grant utilized a helicopter to make it to far-flung game-week events.

"It got out of hand," Grant recalls. "If you want to promote something, do it in California. They do everything overboard."

The Raiders claimed the day in front of a then Super Bowl-record crowd 103,438 fans at the Rose Bowl.

"The thing about those four Super Bowls, they probably faced the four best teams to ever play," Hartman says. "There was no disgrace that he lost."

When the Metrodome hosted Super Bowl XXVI, Hartman promoted Grant's candidacy for the Pro Football Hall of Fame. Then, in 1994, he proudly presented Grant for enshrinement and rode with his friend in the Hall of Fame Parade.

It was a full-circle moment for men with connections to the early days of professional football.

Hartman was born in Minneapolis on March 15, 1920, six months before organizers began to lay the NFL's foundation in Canton, Ohio. Grant's father, Harry Peter Grant Sr., practiced with the Duluth Eskimos in 1926 and played in the team's lone home game that season. Bud was born May 20, 1927.

Their legacies long assured, Grant and Hartman are now forever linked to the Vikings, the state of Minnesota, and even the site of Super Bowl LII. Bud Grant Way was established outside of U.S. Bank Stadium in 2014, and the Sid Hartman Media Entrance of U.S. Bank Stadium was dedicated in 2016.

Grant spoke at the dedication and reflected on their friendship, saying, "As one man can love another, I love you, Sid Hartman."

A native of Clarksville, Tenn., Craig Peters has been a writer/editor for Vikings.com and official team publications since 2014.

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